

A
DISCOURSE
O F
Conscience.

S H E W I N G,

I. What CONSCIENCE is, and what are its Acts and Offices.

II. What is the Rule of it.

III. The several sorts of CONSCIENCE.

IV. How some Practical Cases or Questions concerning CONSCIENCE may be resolv'd.

V. The Benefit and Happiness of a *Good Conscience*, and the Unhappiness of an *Evil one*.

VI. How a *Good Conscience* may be attain'd, and how we may judge whether we have attain'd it.

Publish'd chiefly for the Benefit of the *Unlearned*, tho' it may also be useful to others.

Together with
Brief REFLECTIONS upon that which the
Author of *Christianity not mysterious* saith
upon that known Text, 1 TIM. iii. 16.

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THE
DEDICATION.

THE following TREATISE is humbly Dedicated to the Honour and Glory of the Blessed and Only POTENTATE, who dwells in the Light to which no Man can approach, the KING Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the Only-wise GOD, the GOD of PEACE, that brought again from the Dead our LORD JESUS, that Great *Shepherd of the Sheep.*

May HE be graciously pleas'd, by the Blood of the

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Ever.

The Dedication.

Everlasting Testament, to cleanse our Consciences from dead Works, to serve Him the Living God, and also to make us perfect in every Good Work, to do his Will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his Sight, thro' JESUS CHRIST, to whom be all Praise and Dominion for ever and ever. *Amen.*

May HE be also graciously pleas'd to give a Blessing to the ensuing TREATISE, and favourably to accept of the *Weak Endeavours* of

*His Most Unworthy
Servant.*

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ERRATA.

PAGE 2, line 22, instead of *Matter*, read *Text*. p. 18, l. 26, after
of r. *the*. p. 21, l. 23, instead of *χύει* r. *καίει*. p. 22, l. 14,
instead of *Ἑλληνιάς* r. *Ἑλληνικάς*. p. 23, l. 4, blot out the
Comma after *Sanctus*. p. 23, l. 5, read the later *our* after *to*. p. 32,
l. 29, instead of 7.1, r. 7.25; p. 36, l. 30, instead of 9, r. 19; p. 40,
l. 10, blot out *that they know*; p. 43, l. 14, read the Hebrew thus,
וְיָנֵחַ הַטָּרְחָה בְּיָדָיו; p. 50, l. 3, instead of *the power*
r. *in the power*; p. 54, l. 14, instead of *danger*, r. *no danger*; p. 62,
l. 27, instead of *ἀδικοῦτ* ⊕, r. *ἀδικούντ* ⊕; p. 73, l. 14, add
(i) after *Ear*; p. 73, l. 21, add (k) after *Oyl*; p. 86, l. 21, instead
of *unquiet*, r. *an unquiet*; p. 90, l. 18, dele the full Stop at *Val-*
erent.

A
DISCOURSE
O F
Conscience.

C H A P. I.

The INTRODUCTION.

THIS TREATISE being chiefly design'd for the Benefit of the Unlearned, it was necessary that it should be writ in a plain and familiar Stile, all unusual words, and such as are not understood by the Vulgar, being carefully avoided. It was more especially necessary to abstain from the use of *School-terms*, or the terms wherewith those that were call'd *School-men* (a), and their Followers, have obscur'd the Doctrin concerning CONSCIENCE, as they have also perplex'd it with a great many intricate

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cate and unnecessary *Questions* (*b*), fruitless *Disputations*, and impertinent *Niceties* and *Subtilties* (*c*).

The Subject of this Treatise is of universal Concernment, *Conscience* being that which every one having the use of Reason, whether he be high or low, learned or unlearned, Prince or Peasant, carries about him continually in his own Breast : And therefore that which is most necessary to be known concerning it, should be taught so plainly, as that it may be understood by *all*. And this is that which is attempted here, (the Doctrin of *Conscience* having been clouded and darken'd by others, who undertook to explain it) to set it in so clear a light, that the meanest Capacities may, if they please, (with a little help at least) understand it.

But all this I speak only of the Treatise it self : As to the brief Notes that are added, in another Character, at the end of every Chapter, and to which the little Letters in the Matter refer, they are design'd for others (to give them some Satisfaction as to some Particulars in the Treatise) and not for Persons of *more ordinary Capacities* ; and therefore they may overlook them, and pass to the following Chapter.

It is generally known to have been one of St. *Austin's* Wishes, That *he might hear St. Paul preach* ; to which some have added another Wish, That *his Theme or Text might be Conscience*. Certainly he was very fit to preach of *Conscience*, who could preach so to the *Conscience* of
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of such a one as *Felix* the Governor, as to make him tremble, *Act. 24, 25.* And accordingly he did treat often of it, as appears both in his *Epistles*, and also in his *Sermon*, to the *Jews*, *Act. 23.* and his Defence of himself before *Felix*, *Act. 24.* And it would not be amiss if in this degenerate Age Preachers did make *Conscience* more the Theme or Subject of their Discourses.

If this small Treatise shall be so happy as to make the Doctrin concerning *Conscience* in some measure plain to the meanest Readers, more especially if through the Blessing of God it shall be effectual to perswade any to regard so great and excellent a Good, to value such an inestimable Treasure as a good *Conscience* is, to exercise themselves, *to have always a Conscience void of Offence both before GOD and Man*; if any shall be perswaded by it daily to examine and seriously to study to amend the Book of their *Conscience* (*d*); if by it any ignorant *Conscience* shall be enlightned, any secure or sleepy one awaken'd, any weak one strengthened, any benumb'd, stupid, or fear'd *Conscience* brought to Sense or Feeling; if *Conscience* (which seems to be not only dead, but also buried) shall be reviv'd, or it shall in any Man be better'd; if, finally, it shall be a means to beget or encrease a good *Conscience*, and the Comforts of it in any, I shall be engag'd to render immortal Thanks to him, who alone hath the Dominion and Sovereignty over the *Consciences* of all the Men in the World.

(a) The terms wherewith those that were cal'd Schoolmen and their Followers, &c.] As *Synderesis*; see *Aquinas*, p. 1, qu. 79, art. 12, 13. Later Writers have the word *Synteresis*, and some of them think that the Schoolmen being ignorant of the Greek Tongue, writ *Synderesis* instead of *Synteresis*. And I grant, that *S. Hierom*, in *Ezek.* 1. hath not *Synderesis* according to our Copies, but *συντήσις* in some, and in others *συντησις*: But withal, I cannot but think, that in the Copies of *S. Hierom*, which the Schoolmen follow'd, it was *Synderesis*; for I cannot imagin what Reason they could have to move them to change the word. Perhaps also they are not so much to be blam'd for rendring it by *Conelectio*, (see *Durand.* l. 2, dist. 39, qu. 4.) as some imagin. But howsoever it be as to these things, it was not fit to trouble the ordinary Reader with such obscure terms as either *Synderesis* or *Synteresis*. The same may be said of several other School-terms, as *Speculabilia*, *Conscientia antecedens & consequens*, *Judicium dianoeticum*, &c.

(b) Unnecessary Questions.] As, whether Conscience be a Power or an Habit, or an Act; or whether it be best to call it a Faculty, which word (as some think) may agree both to Powers and Habits. So, whether Conscience belong to the Understanding, or to the Will, or whether it do not rather appertain to both, yea, and to the Memory also; See *Aquinas*, and *Durand.* ubi supra, also *Scotus*, l. 2, dist. 39, qu. 2.

(c) Subtilities.] So *Seneca*, *Epist.* 95, complains, *Simplex illa & aperta virtus in obscuram & solertem scientiam versa est, docemurque disputare, non vivere.*

(d) To amend the Book of their Conscience.] *Ad hunc librum discutiendum & emendandum omnes alii inventi sunt.* So *Bernard.* de *Conscientia*, c. 4.

C H A P. II.

What CONSCIENCE is, and what are its Acts and Offices.

CONSCIENCE is nothing else but every Man's own Heart (*a*), knowing, witnessing, and judging.

I say, Every Man's Heart ; for the word *Heart* (tho' it have other significations) is often in Scripture put for *Conscience*. So when it is said, 1 *Sam.* 24. 5. & 2 *Sam.* 24. 10. that David's *Heart smote him*, the meaning is, that his *Conscience smote him*. And when *Job* says, c. 27. 6. *My Heart shall not reproach me*, his meaning was, that his *Conscience* should have no cause to reproach him. And when we read, *Eccles.* 7. 22. *Thine own Heart knoweth that thou thy self hast cursed others* : One Translation hath it, *Thy Conscience knows*, &c. (*b*) So in the New Testament, 1 *Joh.* 3. *If our Heart* (that is, our *Conscience*) *condemn us*, v. 20, and *If our Heart* (or *Conscience*) *condemn us not*, v. 21, and, *We shall assure our Hearts*, v. 19, that is, our *Consciences*.

I say, That it is every Man's Heart knowing (*c*). The very word *Conscience* doth denote Knowledge, as the Latin and Greek words for

it also do. I may add, That the Hebrew (*d*) word, which the Greek Translation, and also our own, in the Margin of our Bibles, render *Conscience*, *Eccles. 10. 20*, doth denote *Knowledge*, *Curse not the King, no, not in thy Thought*; so we read in the Text of our Bibles; but in the Margin, instead of *Thought*, we have *Conscience*; and so the meaning is, *Curse not the King, tho' thou do it so secretly, that none but thine own Heart or Conscience can know it*. Conscience must know, in order to its witnessing and judging. It cannot witness the Truth, if it do not know it; and it cannot judge of Actions, whether they be good or evil, unless it know both them, and the Rule by which they are to be judged.

As Conscience implies Knowledge, so it signifies a knowing together: And this may be either the knowing one thing together with another, or the knowing the same thing together with another person. 1st, Conscience knows one thing together with another, as the Deed or Action with the Rule; that which we have done, or are about to do, with that which should be the Rule of all our Actions, that is, the Law. *Joseph's Brethren, Gen. 42. 21*, knew how they had dealt with him, here was the Knowledge of the Deed; they knew also, that they ought not to have dealt so with their Brother, here was the Knowledge of the Rule or Law which taught them this. 2^{dly}, Conscience knows the same thing together with some other Person (*e*), as (most especially) together with GOD or CHRIST. In *Job*

16. 19, we read thus; *My Witness is in Heaven, and my Record is on high*: but instead of *My Record is on high*, some Translations have it thus (f); *He that knows together with me is on high*. And, 1 Joh. 3. 20. *God is greater than our Heart, (or Conscience) and knows all things*; He knows all that our Conscience knows, and much more (g). There are many things which are now known only to him that *searcheth the Heart and tryeth the Reins*, and to Conscience. 3dly, Another Account may be given of this Signification of the word *Conscience*; it *knows together*, that is, Conscience knows together with our selves. Conscience is supposed or feigned to be another Person within us, which knows together with us all that we do, say, or think. *I know nothing by my self*; so we read, 1 Cor. 4. 4. but it may be translated, (h) *I know nothing with my self*.

Conscience is every Man's Heart-witnessing, as well as knowing. There is express mention of Conscience its bearing witness: *I speak the truth, I lie not, my Conscience bearing me witness, or witnessing with me*; so the Apostle, Rom. 9. 1. And, 2 Cor. 1. 12. he speaks of the Testimony of his Conscience; as, Rom. 2. 15. he says of the Heathens, that *their Conscience did bear Witness*, or (as it is in the margin of our Bibles) *Conscience witnessing with them*.

Lastly, As Conscience is every Man's own Heart, knowing and witnessing, so also judging. Thus, 1 Cor. 8. 7. *Some* (says the Apostle) *with Conscience of an Idol, to this hour, (that is, to this time judging an Idol to be something)*

thing) *eat of somewhat, as being offer'd to an Idol.* So, 1 *Per.* 2. 19. *If a Man, for Conscience toward GOD, (that is, because he judges that he ought to obey God) endure Grief.* And so, in our ordinary Speech, when a Man saith, *I cannot do this, it is against my Conscience to do it,* his meaning is, that it is against his Judgment: Conscience, in this case, is nothing but his Judgment. Hence it is that we hear so much of the *Court of Conscience.* Conscience doth, as it were, keep a Court of Judgment within us.

This Judgment of Conscience is by way of reasoning or arguing, as thus: He that commits Adultery or Murther is guilty of a very heinous Sin. Thou (says Conscience) hast committed Adultery, or thou art guilty of Murther: Therefore thou art guilty of a very heinous Sin. Thus the Apostle, *Rom.* 2. 15, having said of Heathens, *That their Conscience did bear them witness,* adds, that *their Thoughts or* — (as the word signifies) Reasonings (i) did accuse or excuse one-another. So they, *St. John* 8. 9, were convinc'd by their Conscience: Their Conscience argued so strongly, that it quickly convinc'd them, that they were not without Sin.

As to the things which Conscience knows and witnesseth (k), or of which it judgeth, they are many. 1. Some are within us, as our Thoughts, Wills, Affections, Belief, or Unbelief, Aims, Purposes, or Intentions, and the Sincerity of them. Conscience knows all these, and also witnesseth and judgeth of them. 2. It knows,

knows, and withal witnesseth and judgeth of things without us, our Words, Deeds, Conversations, our Estate toward God, and the like. It also knows, witnesseth, and judgeth what is our Duty toward God, our Neighbor, and our selves; as likewise concerning the Truth and Falshood of Things. The Apostle, 2 Cor. 1. 12, makes express mention of Conscience its witnessing of his Conversation and Sincerity: *The testimony of our Conscience, says he, that in simplicity and godly sincerity (or sincerity before God) we have had our conversation (1).* So Rom. 9. 1, 2. he tells us, That his Conscience did bear witness of his Affections, and of his speaking the truth; *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my Conscience bearing me witness, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my Heart.*

As to Mens Speeches and Actions, which Conscience hath to do with, they are either past, or present, or to come: They are also either our own, or other Mens. That Conscience judgeth of the Speeches, Actions, and Conversations of other Men (and not of our own only) is apparent. The Apostle, 2 Cor. 4. 2. commended himself to every man's Conscience, that is, he endeavour'd to order his Speech, Actions, and Conversation so, that every Man's Conscience could not but judge or think well of them. So, 2 Cor. 5. 11. *We (says he) are made manifest to God, and I trust that we are also made manifest in your Consciences.* God knew, and was a Witness, of his sincere Purpose, and he hop'd that their Consciences also were satisfied

fied, and Witnesses of it. Add hereto 1 Cor. 10. 28, 29. *If any man say unto you, This is offer'd in sacrifice to Idols, eat not, for his sake that shew'd it, and for Conscience sake. Conscience, I say, not thine own, but the others; for why is my liberty judg'd of another man's Conscience? In this case I must not eat for the sake of another Man's Conscience, not of mine own: For I am satisfied in my Conscience, that I am at liberty, and may lawfully eat; but why should my liberty be judg'd by another man's Conscience? that is, why should I use my Liberty, and eat then, when another Man's Conscience will judge me to have sin'd in eating, and entertain Jealousies or Hard Thoughts of me? All these Texts shew, that Conscience also judgeth of others; and Rom. 2. 15. might have been alledg'd to the same purpose, but that will be explain'd more fully in Chap. 5.*

I proceed to the Acts or Offices of Conscience. The three principal have been nam'd, *Knowing, Witnessing, and Judging*; the rest flow from these, or may be refer'd some way to them. Of Actions past Conscience is a Witness and a Judge; of present it is a Witness, Register, and Judge; in reference to Actions to be done, it is a Judge, Monitor, and Director. Concerning Actions past, it both witnesseth that they have been done, and judgeth how they were done; it passeth Sentence upon them, whether they were good or evil: If they were good, it is the Office of Conscience to defend, applaud, and commend us, saying, *Well done good and faithful Servant*; and to re-ward

ward us by ~~affording~~ us inward Comfort, Delight, and Joy ; if they were evil, its Office or Duty is to accuse, reprove, condemn, smite, lash, scourge, and torment us with Fears, Grief, and Anguish, for that which we have done, to bring our Sins to remembrance, and set them before us, and make us say, *That our Iniquities are with us ; and as for our Transgressions, we know them, Isa. 59. 12 ; see also Psal. 51. 3.* As to our present Actions, Conscience not only sees, observes, and is a witness of them, nor only passes Judgment upon them, whether they are good or evil, but it also performs the Office of a Register or Recorder, having always the Pen in its Hand, to write down and record all that we either think, say, or do. If the Action be good, it speaks Peace to us, encourageth and cherisheth us in the doing it ; as on the other hand it checks, damps, and pinches us in the commission of evil. In reference to the time to come, or the Actions that we are about to do, its great Office is, to judge of the good or evil, the lawfulness or sinfulness of them, to direct us what we may do, because God hath not forbidden it ; what we not only may, but must do, because he hath commanded it ; and lastly, what we must not do, because he hath said, *Thou shalt not do it.* Its Duty is to say to us, *This is the way, walk in it, turn not to the right hand, or to the left.* This ought to be done, and this may lawfully be done, but this is in no wise to be done. Its Duty is further to move and urge us, to stir us up, and put us forward to that which is good ; and likewise to dis-

discourage, affright, with-hold, and do all that may be to keep us from the doing of evil, to warn us, saying, Be sure that thou do it not; or, as *Pilate's Wife*, *Have nothing to do with that just Person*. Happy are we if we obey the Voice of *Conscience* when it warns us; we shall not then need much to fear its accusing and condemning us.

(a) *Conscience* is nothing else but every Man's own Heart, &c.] There are many Definitions of *Conscience*, and not a few have labour'd to be very exact in defining it, and yet some serious Men have complain'd, that the Definitions given of it have rather obscur'd than illustrated it. And *S. Austin*, *de Ordine*, l. 2, c. 2. says, *Facilius est mihi videre in alterius definitione quid non probem, quam quicquam bene definiendo explicare*: So that he thought it no easie matter to define any thing well. I have therefore contented my self with a short, plain and familiar Description of *Conscience*, suited to the Capacities of those for whose Benefit this Treatise is chiefly design'd.

(b) One Translation hath it, *Thy Conscience knows*.] *Scit Conscientia tua Vulg.*

(c) Every Man's Heart knowing.] And therefore it may be truly said, That *Conscientia est cordis Scientia*, understanding the words *Cordis Scientia* not in that sense, according to which the Heart is the thing known, but so as that the Heart is that which doth know. I would therefore translate *Cordis Scientia* (not *The Knowledge of the Heart*, which is ambiguous, and capable of both senses, but) *The Hearts knowing*. And the devout *Bernard*, *de Interiori Domino*, c. 22. understands it thus, and adds, *Que (Cordis Scientia) dupliciter intelligitur, viz. ut illa que se novit per se, vel illa que præter se etiam alia novit ex se Cor enim & se novit sua Conscientia, & multa alia*.

(d) The Hebrew word] *יָדַע*; the Syriac in that place hath the very same word, as the Chaldees hath *יָדַע*, from *יָדַע*, To know. And I cannot but observe also, that *Gen. 43. 22.* where *Joseph's Brethren* say, *We know not who put our Money in our Sacks*, instead of *יָדַע*, *We knew not*. The *Vulgar* hath, *Non est in nostra Conscientia*.

(e) Knows

(e) Knows the same thing together with some other Person.] *Conscius cum alio sciens est*; so *Nomius Marcellus*, cap. 5.

(f) Some Translations have, *He that knows together with me.*] *Conscius meus* *Vulg.* Συνίσωρ με, 70. The *Syriac* and *Arabick* come toward this, ידע Syr. *ידע* Arab. i. e. They that know me.

(g) And much more.] *Notior est illis homo quam sibi. Illis*, i. e. *Naminihus*.

(h) I know nothing of my self.] ἑδὴν ἑμαυτῷ σύνιδα.

(i) Reasonings.] λογισμῶν.

(k) As to the things which Conscience knows, &c.] These things about which Conscience is conversant, are in the Schools call'd, the *Object* of it; and there are *Disputes* about it, and the most make it not so comprehensive as they ought to do.

(l) Sincerity before God.] εὐλαβεία Θεῷ, *Sincerity of God*, i. e. Such Sincerity as approves itself in the Sight of God.

C H A P. III.

Of the Rule of Conscience.

THE Rule of Conscience is the Will of God (*a*). As that is good which God wills ; so if Conscience would direct us to that which is good, it must acquaint itself first, and then us, with the Will of God (*b*.) That which teaches us what is the Will of God, is his Law, both that which he hath written in our Hearts, and that which is contain'd in the Scriptures.

Of the Law written in the Heart, the Apostle speaks, *Rom. 2. 15. Who, (that is, which Heathens) shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts ;* so that (as it is *Ver. 14.*) *Tho' they had not the Law, (that is, the Law written in Tables of Stone, or in Paper) yet they did by Nature the Things of the Law, and not having a Law, were a Law to themselves.* This is that which is usually call'd the Law of Nature, because it was writ in our Hearts by the God of Nature (*c*) (it is written by an immortal Nature, in an immortal Mind ;) it also directs us to such things as are agreeable to our Nature, as we are Creatures endued with Reason, and finally it is common to the whole Race of Mankind. *It is common to all, constant. It is not one at Rome, another at Athens, not one now, another*

ther afterward, but at all times, and in all Nations, it is one and the same, everlasting and unchangeable. Neither the Senate, nor the People can free us from being bound by this Law: Neither need we seek out any to explain and interpret it (d); Thus Cicero. It was from the beginning, it is not a Child of yesterday, but as old as Mankind it self. And as the Law is a Light, Prov. 6. 23. so this Law of Nature is also call'd the Light of Nature; that Light which he, who is Light, and in whom is no Darknes at all, hath set up in every Man's Heart, and with it enlightheth every Man that comes into the World. By this Light Men judge of themselves, what is right. We might have known the Things commanded by this Law, to be our Duty, tho' we had never been told so by the Scripture. The Things commanded by it, are such as these, That God is to be worshipp'd, our Parents to be honour'd, we should do to others as we would that they should do to us, and the like: These are agreed upon, and acknowledged to be Duties, not by one, or two, or a few, but by all Men throughout the World. The Hebrew Writers make all those, which they call Precepts, given to the Sons of Noah, to be Commands of the Law of Nature (e): Six of which were (say they) given to Adam, and afterward repeated to Noah, with addition of a Seventh. These were, 1. Of strange Worship, or that they should keep themselves from Idols. 2. Of Blessing the Name of God (f), or (as some render it) of blaspheming it, that they should carefully abstain from blaspheming
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the Name of the ever-blessed God. 3. Of shedding Blood, that they should do no Murther. 4. Of disclosing Nakedness, that they should avoid all unlawful Copulations, not commit Adultery. 5. Of Theft or Rapine, that they should not Steal. 6. Of Judgments, or Administration of Justice, that they should not respect Persons in Judgment, nor any way pervert it. 7. Of a Member of any live Creature, that they should not eat the Flesh of any Creature with the Blood, or taken from it, being alive. These are the Seven Commandments given to the Sons of *Noah*, according to the *Hebrew* Doctors. And some say, that all of them (except the Sixth, which is of Judgments, or Administration of Justice) are contain'd in the Decree made by the Apostles, *Acts* 15. 29. according to some Copies. The Two first are contain'd (say they) in the Command, to abstain from Idol-sacrifices, or Meats offer'd to Idols; the Third, in the Command, to abstain from Blood; the Fourth, in the Command, to abstain from Fornication; the Fifth, in that which (tho' our Bible hath it not) is in other Copies, (*g*) both Printed and Manuscript; as also in one Eastern Translation, that is, Not to do to others, that which Men would not have done to themselves; the Seventh, in the Command, to abstain from things strangled.

As we have seen, that the Will of God (which is the Rule of Conscience) is taught us by that Law, which God hath imprinted, or stamped on our Hearts; so more especially it is

is taught us by the Law contain'd in the Writings of the Old and New Testament ; as by the Light of Nature, so much more by the clearer Light of Scripture. As the Light of Nature is the Candle of the Lord within us, so the Scripture is a Lanthorn to our Feet, and a Light to our Paths without us. As to the Laws contain'd in the Old Testament, there are some that did belong only to some Persons, or only to the Ages that were before the coming of Christ. As Circumcision was commanded particularly to *Abraham* and his Posterity, to be a Sign of the Covenant between God and them, *Gen. 17. 11.* And so Sacrifices being appointed to be Shadows or Figures of the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ, and his Suffering in our Flesh, did particularly belong to the time before his coming : Other Laws there are which appertain'd to the State of the People of *Israel*, before that Christ was made Flesh. And finally, there are many which Christ and his Apostles have made void in the New Testament ; as the Laws concerning *Meats, Drinks, their Holy-days, their observing the Beginnings of Months, and their Sabbath-days*, *Col. 2. 16.* These we are not bound to observe, and so they are no part of the Rule of Conscience. But all the Laws contain'd in the Old Testament, which are confirm'd by Christ and his Apostles in the New ; as also all that are agreeing to the Law of Nature, and all that command any Virtue, are in force to us, as much as they were to the People of *Israel* ; and consequently Conscience

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is to be rul'd by them. *The whole Law of Piety, Holiness, Humanity, speaking the Truth, Chastity, Righteousness, Mercy, Good-will, Honesty, or Purity of Living, remains in force still, says an Ancient Writer (k). A great Champion for the Church of Rome says of their Adversaries (that is of Protestants,) That (l) they assert such a Christian Liberty, that we are not subject in Conscience to any Law, and that Moses with his Law of the Ten Commandments doth not appertain to us: But this is a most gross Slander thrown upon us by him. If a few Antinomians delude some ignorant Persons with such wild Fancies (or rather Dotages) this ought not to be imputed to Protestants, who receive the Law of the Ten Commandments, as a Rule of Life, and zealously maintain it to be so against those dangerous Sectaries. As to the New Testament, and the Laws contain'd in it, whether concerning Belief or Practice, we are bound to obey them all; and they are all to be receiv'd as a Rule of Conscience.*

The Scriptures, both of the Old, and of the New Testament, are full fraught with the Commands of the Law of Nature, or the Law of World (as some call it) (m) such as the Love of God and our Neighbour; on which Two Commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets, S. Mat. 22. 40. That is, they are the Sum of all that is taught in the Law and the Prophets, touching our Duty to God, and our Neighbour. The like is said of the Command, To do to others as we would be done to; This is the Law and the Prophets, S. Mat. 7.

12. That is, this comprehends in short all that is deliver'd by the Law and the Prophets, touching our Duty to our Neighbour (*n*). Nor is it in vain, that the Scripture abounds thus with the Laws of Nature: For there are some things, which perhaps, are not impossible to be discerned by the Light of Nature, and yet few would have discern'd them, if they had not been deliver'd more clearly in the Scripture. And as to other things, which many Men might have discern'd to be Good or Evil, by the Light of Nature only; it must needs more fully satisfy, and confirm us, that they are so, when we have the Evidence of God's own Testimony added thereto. Whereby it appears how much we are bound to render to our Creator, the Father of all Mercies, eternal Thanks, for, that he hath in Compassion to our Frailty, given us a Law, whereby we may more plainly, and fully understand, what is naturally Good, and what Evil, what Just, and what Unjust; whereby those things are set in a clear Light, which Nature's dim Lanthorn shew'd but darkly. Withal, to those of Nature, our merciful God hath added Laws, requiring higher Duties, in order to the obtaining an higher End, than by the Light of Nature, we could have discover'd, or promis'd to our selves. By the Gospel, the Blessed Jesus hath brought Life and Immortality to light, as also the Way to it, that is, himself, *S. John 14. 6.* Both the Way and the End are such, as could never have entred into the Heart of Man, to conceive or apprehend, if God himself had

not graciously reveal'd them. This he hath done in the Scriptures, which precious Treasure we should be careful to use to our everlasting Good, as well as to the Glory and Honour of him that gave it, seeking by all means to know, what the Will of our God is, what is righteous before him, what is holy, perfect, and good in his Sight, that we may truly and faithfully observe to do it, and make it the Rule of our Consciences and Lives.

Thus it hath been shew'd, what is the Rule of Conscience, to wit, the Will of God. He is, that one great Lawgiver, that is able to save, and to destroy, *S. Jam. 4. 12.* He only hath Dominion over the Conscience. This Will of God is made known to us by two Lights, the Light of Nature, and the Light of Scripture: The less Light, that of Nature rules the Night, it gives some light to the Consciences of those that are under the Night of Heathenism; the greater Light, that of Scripture rules the Day, it is a Rule of Conscience to us, who by the Mercy of God enjoy the glorious Day of the Gospel.

Some have deny'd, that there is any Law of Nature (o): They said, that there is nothing just and righteous in itself, or unjust, nothing honest, or dishonest, but in Nature all things are indifferent (p). One of the Ancients thought these Men to have been but half awake at the best; others have judg'd, that they scarce deserv'd the Names of Men. But as these Men deny'd all natural Religion, so a dangerous sort of Men is risen of late, that are for none but natural
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Religion only. As to revealed Religion, or that which is taught us in the Holy Scriptures, they admit no more of it, than the Light of Nature doth approve of. Let these beware, lest they provoke the Almighty so far, as to give them over to further Delusions, that they admit neither of natural, nor of revealed Religion, but throw away all.

(a) That is good which God wills.] Τὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ὅπερ ὁ Θεὸς βούλεται, Damascen de Orthod. Fide, l. 4. c. 23.

(b) That which teaches us, &c.] *The Law is, ἡ τὸ τοῦ διδάσκουσα ἐντολή, the Commandment which teacheth us this, that is, what God wills, Damascen, ibid.*

(c) It is written by an immortal Nature, in an immortal Mind.] *Philo Judæus, Lib. Quod omnis probus liber.* His Words are very remarkable, viz. These, Νόμος ἀψευδής ὁ ὁρῶν λόγος, ἢ ἢ ὑπὸ τοῦ δεινῆ ἢ τοῦ δεινῆ διηγήσατο φθαρτὸς ἐν καρδίᾳ, ἢ σήλαις ἀψυχὸς ἀψυχῶν, ἀλλ' ὑπ' ἀθανάτου φύσιος ἀφθαρτὸς ἐν ἀθανάτῳ διανοίᾳ τοπωθεῖς.

(d) Thus Cicero.] *De Republica, l. 3. ap. Lactantium, l. 6. c. 8.* To the same purpose *Aristotle, Ethic. l. 5. c. 10.* says, Τὸ εὖσι ἀκίνητον καὶ πανταχὺ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει δύναμιν, ὥσπερ τὸ πῦρ καὶ ἐν θαλάσσῃ καὶ ἐν Πέρσαις κύει; with which that exactly agrees which he hath, *Rhetor. l. 1. c. 13.* 'Εστὶ δὲ μακτιύονται τι πάντες φύσις κοινὴν δίκαιον καὶ ἀδίκον, καὶ μὴ διμῆα κοινὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἢ μὴ διὰ συνδύκην.

(e) Six of which were given to Adam.] So *Maimonides Halach. Melakim, c. 9.* in the beginning, **עַל שֵׁשֶׁת דְּבָרִים**
נִצְטַח אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן **וְהָיָה לְנֶפֶשׁ**

(f) Of blaspheming.] **בְּרַחֵם**. It is known, that **בָּרַךְ** is sometimes rendred, *To bless*, sometime, *To curse*. Hence it is, that some have here translated, *Of blessing the Name of God*; for which they are sharply reprov'd by others, who say, that they ought to have translated, *Of blaspheming the Name of God*.

(g) In other Copies, both Printed and Manuscript, and in one of the Eastern Translations.] The Translation is the *Æthiop.* The Copies are *Cantab. Stephan. 2, 10, and Complut.* We have it also in *Irenæus*, l. 3. c. 12.

(h) The Beginnings of Months.] The Word us'd, *Cal. 2. 16.* is, *νεμηνία*, and we translate it, *The New Moon*, and some have suppos'd, that it always signifies so. These derive it from *μήνη*, which signifies the *Moon*, but I would know, why it may not be deriv'd from *μῆν*, which signifies a *Month*, and so *νεμηνία* may be the *Beginning of the Month*, or the *New Month*. And thus *Suidas* and *Phavorinus* interpret *νεμηνία* by *ἡ τῆς μηνὸς ἀρχὴ*, as *Julius Pollux* doth by *πρῶτη ἡμέρα μηνός*. It occurs in *Plutarch* more than once in this signification, *Νῦν ἔστιν αἱ Ῥωμαικαὶ νεμηνίαι πρὸς τὰς Ἑλληνικάς ὁμολογούμενον ἔχουσι*, *Plutarch* in *Romulo*. And in *Galba*, *Ἐπὶ λῆξιν ἡ νεμηνία τῆς πρώτης μηνός, ἐν καλάνδαις καλεῖται*. Now all know that the *Roman Calends*, or *νεμηνίαι* were the *Beginning*, or *First Day of the Month*, and had no respect to the *Change* or *Renewing of the Moon*. In *Thucydides*, l. 2. and *Josephus*, *Ant.* l. 4. c. 4. and *Epiphanus*, *Her. f.* 30. *Num.* 32. we meet with this Expression, *νεμηνία κατὰ σελήνην* (and the like we have in *Philo de Septenario*) and doth not this imply, that there may be *νεμηνία ἢ κατὰ σελήνην*? I add, that in the Place of *Josephus* *νεμηνία* is rendred *mensis initium*, by *Epiphanus Scholasticus*. Finally in the 70. *νεμηνίαι*, *Numb.* 10. 10. and 28. 11. answers to the Words, which we rightly translate, *The Beginnings of the Month*. It fully appears then, that tho' *νεμηνία* may in some Authors signify the *New Moon*, yet it also signifies frequently, the *Beginning of the Month*: And I had reason to translate it so here, where I speak of the *Laws of Moses*, for *Moses* commanded the *Israelites* to observe (not the *New Moons*, but) the *Beginnings of their Months*. In the *Beginnings of your Months*, ye shall blow with the *Trumpets*, *Num.* 10. 10. In the *Beginnings of your Months*, ye shall offer a *Burnt-offering*, *Numb.* 28. 11.

(i) All that command any Virtue.] Those *Laws of Moses* are eternal, whose Reason is eternal; now the Reason of those *Laws* which command true real *Virtue* is eternal.

(k) An ancient Writer.] *Tertullian de pudicitia*, c. 6. The Words which immediately precede in him, are these, *Onera Legis usque ad Joannem, non remedia; operum juga rejecta sunt, non disciplinarum; libertas in Christo non fecit innocentia injuriam.*

(l) A great Champion of the Church of Rome.] *Bellarmin de Justif.* l. 4. c. 5. f. 2.

(m) The Law of the World.] *Sed neque jus mundi valuit, neque fœdera sancta, Gentibus Lucan,* l. 10.

(n) Touching our Duty our to Neighbour.] But that Law of doing to others as we would be done to, may comprehend our Duty to God too, according to *S. Austin de Doct. Christ.* l. 3. c. 14. I shall transcribe his Words, *Quæ sententia cum refertur ad dilectionem Dei, omnia flagitia moriuntur, cum ad proximi, omnia facinorosa. Nemo enim vult corrumpi habitaculum suum, non ergo debet corrumpere habitaculum Dei, seipsum scilicet.*

(o) They said, that there is nothing just or righteous, &c.] *Μηδὲν εἶναι εὖ καὶ οὐδὲν καλὸν ἢ αἰσχροῦ, ἀλλὰ νόμῳ καὶ ὕδατι;* so *Aristippus ap. Laertium,* l. 2. So *Carneades ap. Lactantium,* l. 5. c. 16. taught *jus naturale esse nullum.*

(p) One of the Ancients thought these Men to have been but half awake.] *S. Austin de Doct. Christ.* l. 3. c. 14.

C H A P. IV.

Of a good and evil, a pure and defiled Conscience.

A Good Conscience is either uprightly and faithfully good, or peaceably good.

A Conscience uprightly or faithfully good, is that, which being rightly taught or instructed, doth faithfully discharge the Offices abovemention'd, *Chap. 2.* to wit, the Offices of a Witness, Judge, Director, Register, Reprover, Defender, &c. It is thus good, when it is a faithful and true Witness, or gives a true and upright Judgment of Things. When it also, not only directs us to that which is good, or our Duty to do, but likewise urges and stirs us up to the doing it; and on the other hand, draws back from that which is evil and sinful. When it reproves us for doing that which we ought not to have done, and for not doing that which we ought to have done; also defends and encourages us when we have done well. In a word, Conscience thus good is always against Vice, and for putting us upon all Virtue and Godliness of living. This Conscience uprightly, or faithfully good, is often spoken of in Holy Scripture: As when we are bid to *have or hold a*
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good Conscience ; that is, to continue to live so as a rightly instructed and upright Conscience directs us to live, or judges and witnesses that we should live : See 1 *Tim.* 1. 19. 1 *Pet.* 3. 16.

A Conscience peaceably good, is that which judges us to be in a good Estate toward God, and that upon good Grounds, which witnesses, that we are at Peace with God, and he with us ; not imputing to us our Sins : When Conscience witnesses nothing against us, we know nothing by our selves ; but contrariwise it witnesses, that we have walked before God in Truth, and with a perfect or upright Heart, doing that which is good in his sight, and that we are the Children of God, then it is peaceably good. Thus the Apostle had *the Testimony of his Conscience, that in Simplicity, and Godly Sincerity, he had had his Conversation in the World,* 2 *Cor.* 1. 12. I add, *Upon good Grounds,* for tho' it speak Peace, if it do it not upon good Grounds, it cannot be rightly called good. A Conscience peaceably good is only that which speaks Peace with God's Allowance.

Hence it follows, that a Conscience peaceably good, is always likewise honestly or faithfully good. It cannot be a true Messenger of Peace between God and us, unless it be uprightly good. A truly good Conscience is upright, as well as peaceable : But on the other hand, a Conscience uprightly good is not always peaceably good (*a*). Conscience may be good and not quiet, as well as it may be quiet
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and not good. The most faithful Servants of God may sometimes apprehend, that God hides his Face from them, and be thereupon troubled. Holy Men have often complain'd of this, as we see in the Book of *Psalms*, and elsewhere.

An evil Conscience is often mention'd in Scripture, as well as a good. A Conscience which is not faithfully or uprightly good, is always an evil one: Even when it speaks Peace, it is an evil one, because it doth it not according to Rule, and when it ought. That is an evil Conscience, which calls evil good, and good evil, puts darkness for light, and light for darkness, which before the Action doth not judge rightly, whether it ought, or ought not to be done; nor after, whether it be done well, or otherwise: And so, if it be only such a Witness as that *Levit. 5. 1.* which hath seen and known a Matter, and doth not utter it; that is, tho' it have seen and known that we have committed such or such Evils, it doth not accuse us for them; or if it do not speak Peace when it ought, but contrariwise doth speak Peace when it should create Trouble, or proclaim War; or if it accuse when we do well, and excuse when we do evil; or finally, if it do not stir us up to the doing our Duty, and withhold us from doing the contrary to it, it is an evil Conscience. A good Conscience, when it sees us drowse, and negligent in good Duties, says to us, *Awake thou that sleepest*; to stir us up powerfully to good, it says, *It will never be any Grief, or Offence of Heart*

Heart to thee, to do this; and to hinder and a-fright us from evil, it says, Knowest thou not that it will be Bitterness at the latter end? and therefore the Conscience which fails herein, doth not powerfully urge and awake us to good, and withdraw or hinder us from the contrary, is an evil one. In a word, that is an evil Conscience, which doth not faithfully perform the Offices mention'd above, Chap. 2. in witnessing the Truth, and giving a true Judgment of Things, whether they be good or evil, &c.

The Scripture speaks also of a pure, and of a defil'd Conscience. The Apostle says, That *(b) Deacons must hold the Mystery of the Faith in a pure Conscience, 1 Tim. 3. 9. and that he serv'd God in, or with a pure Conscience, 2 Tim. 1. 3.* A pure Conscience, that is, 1. A sincere Conscience, pure and free from all Guile or Hypocrisie: We are sure that *St. Paul serv'd God thus, having his Conversation in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, (c) or (as it is in the Greek) Sincerity of God, approv'd by him, and making us like him, 2 Cor. 1. 12. The Psalmist calls him a Blessed Man in whose Spirit (or Conscience) there is no Guile, Psal. 32. 2.* 2. A Conscience pure or free from the Filth of Sin, cleans'd from the Defilements of the Flesh, and Pollutions of the World, and from all Unrighteousness; yea in some measure from all Sin in Thought, the Thoughts of our Hearts being cleans'd by the Inspiration of the Spirit of God. 3. A Conscience pure and free from Corrupt and Heretical Opinions, *Holding the*
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Mystery of the Faith in a pure Conscience, not tainted with dangerous Opinions, such as corrupt the Faith, if they do not overthrow it. We have a pure Conscience, when we perform the Duties of a pure and undefiled Religion, and St. James, c. 1. v. 27. acquaints us what some of those Duties are, Pure Religion, (e) or Worship, and undefiled before, (f) or with God, (that is, in the Account of God) and the Father is this, to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and for a Man to keep himself unspotted from the World.

By this we see what a defil'd Conscience is, of which we read, *Tit. 1. 15. To the Defil'd and Unbelievers nothing is pure, but their Mind and Conscience are both defil'd (g).* By *Mind* we may here understand the *Heart*, as knowing or understanding, by *Conscience* the *Heart*, as (not only knowing, but also) witnessing and judging: And so as to the Unbelievers (of whom the Apostle here speaks) their Conscience did not judge aright what ought, or ought not to be done, and so they did stain themselves and it with unlawful Deeds. The Conscience is defiled by dead Works, and therefore it is said, *Heb. 9. 14. How much more shall the Blood of Christ cleanse our Conscience from dead Works?* As the Jews were defil'd by a dead Body, so is the Conscience defil'd by dead Works, that is, sinful Works, which separate and estrange God (who is our Life) from us. *Evil Thoughts, Murthers, Adulteries, Fornications, Thefts, Falsewitnessings, Blasphemies,* do all defile the Conscience: Finally, it is defil'd by every Sin; they

they that did eat of Things offer'd to Idols (thinking an Idol to be something) sinn'd in so doing, and so their Conscience was defil'd, 1 Cor. 8. 7.

(a) Conscience may be good, and not quiet.] *Conscientia alia bona & tranquilla, alia bona & turbata; alia mala & tranquilla, alia mala & turbata.* Bernard. lib. de Conscientia.

(b) Hold the Mystery of the Faith.] The Apostle, as if he foresaw that some would arise, who would assert, That there is no Mystery in the Doctrin of Christianity, very frequently calls it a Mystery, in his Epistles, twice in the Chapter which I here alledge, 1 Tim. 3. to wit, v. 9, & 16. The Author of *Christianity not mysterious*, sect. 3. num. 30. takes notice of both these Texts, but contents himself with a brief Gloss upon the former of them, *Holding the Mystery of the Faith in a pure Conscience*, ver. 9. that is, says he, *living to what they believe.* Upon the later, v. 16. he is more large, and I shall transcribe both the Apostle's Words, and also that which this Author says upon them, not altering, diminishing, or adding any thing, save only the Figures, 1, 2, &c. The Apostle's Words are these; *Without Controversie great is the Mystery of Godliness: God was manifested in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory.* This Author's Words are these; *I will not now insist upon the various Readings of these Words, nor critically determine which is spurious or genuine. 2. All Parties, (how much sower they differ about their Sense) agree, that the Gradations of the Verse are Gospel-Revelations. 3. So that the Mystery of Godliness cannot be restrain'd to any one, but is common to them all. 4. It refers not to the nature of any of them in particular, but to the revelation of them all in general. 5. And it must be granted, without any dispute, that the gracious Manifestation of Christ and his Gospel is not only to us wonderfully stupendous and surprizing; 6. But that it was likewise a very great Mystery to all preceding the New Testament Dispensation. 7. From these Passages it appears, that the Gospel, and the following Expressions are synonymous, viz. The Mystery of the Faith, the Mystery of God and Christ, the Mystery of Godliness, and the Mystery of the Gospel. 8. No Doctrin then of the Gospel is still a Mystery, (for the Apostles conceal'd nothing from us that was useful, and have acquainted us with the whole Counsel of God) but 'tis the Gospel itself, that was heretofore indeed a Mystery, and cannot now, after it is fully reveal'd, properly deserve that Appellation.* Thus far the Author of

of Christianity not *Mysterious*. Now I answer to the 1st, That there is no various readings of these Words, *Great is the Mystery of Godliness*, but there is the Word *Mystery*, and that the Doctrine of Godliness is a great Mystery in all Copies. It was *ὁμολογούμενον* confessedly a great Mystery: There was no Controversie about it in the Apostles Times, nor in the Ages succeeding, till of late. To the 2^d, I shall not enquire how properly this Author calls the Particulars that follow in the Text *Gradations*; but whereas he saith, That *all Parties agree that they are Gospel-Revelations*, I say, That no Party, yea, no Person (besides himself) have said that they are all Gospel-Revelations in his sense of the Word, *i. e.* as Gospel-Revelations signifie Things revealed in and by the Gospel. Yea, I add, That no Man that understands what he says will affirm, that they are all such. For, as to the Being *preach'd to the Gentiles*, it was Matter of Sense; the Apostle and others heard Christ and his Gospel preach'd to them: and as to the Being *believ'd on in the World*, the Profession of such Belief did fall under Sense, as did also the Fruits and happy Effects of it. The preaching Christ to the Gentiles, and their believing, were foretold in the Prophecies under the Law, but no Man (except this Author) will say, that they were reveal'd in and by the Gospel. To the 3^d, this Author only saith, That *the Mystery of Godliness cannot be restrain'd to any one, but is common to them all*: he assigns no Reason why it cannot be restrain'd so. Besides, suppose it cannot be restrain'd to one, it is enough if it may be restrain'd to some, and be not common to them all; as I have just now prov'd that it is not. To the 4th, he also barely says, That the *Mystery of Godliness* refers not to the Nature of any of them in particular, without tender of any Proof of it, tho' he knew that it was deny'd. But it is strange, indeed, that he should say, That *the Mystery of Godliness refers to the Revelation of them*; as if a Mystery was a Revelation, or the Revelation of the Particulars mention'd was the Mystery here spoken of. Doth not this Author himself constantly oppose Mystery and Revelation? To the 5th and 6th, We agree with this Author, That we have just Cause to admire and be astonish'd at the merciful and gracious Condescension of the Almighty, in the Manifestation of his Son; but I do not understand his Meaning in that which follows, *viz.* That *the Manifestation of Christ was a very great Mystery to all preceding the New Testament Dispensation*. For, as to the Heathen, tho' it is true, that it was a Mystery to them, as it was hid from them, they knew nothing of it, nor once thought of such a thing; yet it was a Mystery to them, no otherwise than other things of which they knew nothing were. And as to the Jews that liv'd before Christ, the Manifestation of the *Messiah* was foretold to them, and the devout Persons among them waited for the Consolation of *Israel* by it; but they did not fully comprehend the particular manner how he was to be manifested, as we now can-

not fully comprehend how the Word was made Flesh, but acknowledge the *Mystery of his holy Incarnation*. To the 7th, By the *Passages* of which he speaks, this Author understands the *Passages* which he had transcrib'd, as out of 1 Tim. 3. 9, 16. so out of Rom. 16. 25, 26. 1 Cor. 2. 7. & 4. 1. Ephes. 6. 9. Col. 2. 2. & 4. 3, 4. From these passages (says he) it appears, that the Gospel and the following Expressions are synonymous, viz. the *Mystery of the Faith*, the *Mystery of God and Christ*, the *Mystery of Godliness*, and the *Mystery of the Gospel*. Thus this Author. And if he had said, That the *Mystery of the Gospel*, and those other Expressions, the *Mystery of the Faith*, &c. are synonymous; or if he had said, that the *Faith*, and the *Doctrin* of God and Christ, and the *Doctrin* of Godliness, and the *Gospel*, are synonymous, and that so much appears from the *Passages* in the foremention'd Texts, this might have been assented to. But when he says, That the *Gospel* and the *Mystery of the Gospel*, &c. are synonymous Expressions; as if the word *Mystery* signified nothing at all in all these places, he must pardon us if we do not subscribe to it. We should sooner believe, that (if he durst) he would blot the word *Mystery* out of the whole New Testament. To the 8th, Here this Author confidently concludes, *No Doctrin then of the Gospel is still a Mystery*; and the word *Then* implies, that this follows from something that he had just now said. Let him then pitch upon any thing which he hath here said, from which this can be infer'd. But tho' he cannot do this, yet he will prove it from Acts 20. 20, 27. In v. 20. the Apostle says, *I kept back nothing that is profitable, so as not to shew it to you*. In v. 27. he says, *I have not shun'd to declare to you the whole will, or Counsel of God*. This Author's Argument then must be this: S. Paul conceal'd from his Converts nothing that was useful, and acquainted them with the whole Counsel or Will of God, therefore no Doctrin of the Gospel is still a Mystery: To which we have a clear Answer in the Texts themselves. The whole Will or Counsel of God, with which he acquainted them, was no more than all that which God would have preached to them, and them to know, believe, and do; He kept back nothing which was useful or profitable for them, i. e. which they ought to believe, hope for, and do, for the attainment of Salvation. But as for other things, which were not so profitable for them, and consequently not so necessary to be known by them (of which sort are sundry things relating to the Doctrin of Christianity) or which God had not commanded him to preach; he might be pure from the Blood of all Men, tho' he did not acquaint them with these. S. Paul did not in his Epistles clear all Difficulties relating to the Doctrin of the Gospel, but there were in them things hard to be understood, which some wrested to their own Destruction: See 2 Pet. 3. 16. To that which alone remains, That the Gospel cannot now, after it is fully reveal'd, properly be call'd a Mystery, I briefly answer, That (if this be true) S. Paul, who after the Gospel was fully reveal'd no fewer than eight times, by this Author's own Con-
fession,

session, calls it a Mystery, knew not how to speak properly. I have not taken notice of any thing of that which the learned *Answerer of Christianity not mysterious* hath said in vindication of this Text, (see the *Answer*, p. 84, &c.) because I presume that the Reader hath consulted him already.

(c) In the Greek, Sincerity of God.] *ἐλικενέα Θεῷ.*

(d) Spirit or Conscience.] By *Spirit* in many places of Scripture we may understand *Conscience*; *The same Spirit beareth witness with our Spirit*, Rom. 8. 16. i. e. it bears witness together with our own Conscience, says *Origen* in Rom. 2. 15. And so in the same place he expounds 1 Cor. 2. 11. *Who knows the things of a Man, save the Spirit of Man, which is in him?* And so it may be understood, Prov. 20. 27. *The Spirit of Man is the Candle or Lamp of the Lord, searching all the inward Chambers of the Belly*: The Spirit of Man, i. e. his Conscience, which searcheth and sees into the inmost things of Man.

(e) Religion or Worship.] *θρησκεία.*

(f) Before or with God.] *πρὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ.*

(g) Mind and Conscience.] Here these two are distinguish'd, but sometimes the Mind is put for the Conscience. In *Cicero de Offic.* l. 3. not far from the beginning, are these words: *Meminerit Deum se adhibere testem, i. e. (ut arbitratur) mentem suam, qua nihil homini dedit Deus ipse divinus.* They are alledg'd by *Lactantius*, l. 6. c. 24. who ushers them in thus: *Non minus mirabiliter de Conscientia & Deo Tullius*; clearly expounding *Mens* by *Conscientia*. So *Juvenal*; *Cui frigida mens est Criminibus, tacita sudant præcordia culpa*, Satyr. 1. and *Occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum*, Satyr. 13. And in the Scripture, as Rom. 7. 23. *With my mind I serve the Law of God, with my flesh the Law of Sin*; i. e. my Conscience tells me, That I ought to obey the Law of God, yet my Flesh draws me to obey the Law of Sin: (*Aliudq; Cupido Mens aliud suadet*, Ovid. Metam. l. 7.) And so, Rom. 7. 23. by the *Law of the Mind* may be understood the Dictates of Conscience: See *Damefc. de Orth. Fid.* l. 4, c. 23.

C H A P. V.

*Of a weak, an accusing or excusing,
a wounded, and a fear'd Con-
science.*

A Weak Conscience is a good Conscience, but not fully instructed in the Doctrine of Christianity, and which, for want of such Instruction, is apt to judge and condemn those that make use of their lawful Christian Liberty; and also the Person that hath it is easily drawn, by the Example of others, to that which he either ought not to do, or doubts whether he may lawfully do it. It is mention'd more than once in one Chapter, 1 Cor. 8.

(a) *There is not in all Knowledge, but some out of or with Conscience of an Idol, eat as of things offer'd to an Idol; and their Conscience, being weak, is defil'd; thus the Apostle, v. 7. And v. 12. Sinning thus against the Brethren, and wounding their weak Conscience, ye sin against Christ. To the same purpose he saith, v. 10. If any one see thee, that hast Knowledge, sitting at Meat in the Idol-temple, shall not the Conscience of him, being weak, be embolden'd to eat of things offer'd to an Idol? It is manifest what is meant by a weak Conscience in these places, to wit, a Conscience*

D not

not fully instructed concerning Idols, which had not learnt that an Idol is nothing, (see v. 4.) All had not this Knowledge, all Men had it not, yea, all Christians had it not, but some still had Conscience of an Idol, that is, judg'd it to be something, and were embolden'd by the Example of others, who had more Knowledge than they had, to eat of Meats offer'd to an Idol, as if it was something.

An accusing and excusing Conscience are mention'd *Rom. 2. 15.* *Their Conscience bearing witness, and their Thoughts or Reasonings accusing or excusing one another.* What an accusing Conscience is, every one knows. By excusing here is meant (not the finding out Excuses for our Faults, and seeking to lessen them, but) Conscience, its clearing us from such or such Sins, its witnessing either that we did not commit them, or that if we did commit them, God hath pardon'd them, and doth not impute them to us. The Word which we translate *Excusing* signifies Defending. A remarkable Example of Conscience its Accusing, and that many Years after the Sin was committed, we have in *Joseph's Brethren, Gen. 42. 21.* when they said, *We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the anguish of his Soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.* They only repeated that which their Conscience said to them. We may believe that their Consciences had not been altogether quiet before this, but it now dealt more roundly with them, saying, (b) *Verily, or in truth, you are guilty:* It now certainly

tainly appears that you are, for this present Distress is befallen you from God, for that which you did to your Brother. Conscience accuseth and excuseth either ourselves or others. In the Instance of *Joseph's* Brethren, every Man's Conscience accus'd himself, but in the fore-alledg'd Text, *Rom. 2. 15.* the Consciences even of Heathens (according to our, and other (c) Translations) are said to accuse and excuse one another. If the Conscience of one judg'd that another had done well, it excus'd or defended him; if contrariwise that he had done that which he ought not to have done, it accus'd or condemn'd him.

Of a wounded Conscience we read, *1 Cor. 8. 12. Sinning so against the Brethren, and wounding their weak Conscience, ye sin against Christ:* They wounded the Consciences of their Brethren by emboldening them to eat things offer'd to an Idol, (see *v. 10.*) and that with Conscience of the Idol, (*v. 7.*) that is, thinking the Idol to be something, and eating in honour of it; in doing which they must needs sin. Now every Sin wounds the Conscience, more or less. Every Sin wounds Conscience, as it leaves some Guilt upon it, if the Person know that he hath sinn'd. But every Sin wounds Conscience chiefly as it provokes God to withhold some measure of his Grace, whereupon the Conscience becomes less able to resist Sin afterward. Also when Conscience would stir us up to the doing any Good, or withhold us from the committing any Sin, and we will not hearken to its Voice, and obey

it, this wounds it in another sense, to wit, as it occasions Grief to it. Some by a *wounded Spirit*, Prov. 18. 14, understand a *wounded Conscience*, and by a *wounded Conscience* they understand a Conscience stung or wounded with the Guilt of Sin, or the Sense of their Miserable Estate by reason of their Sins, they being (as the Persons conceive) unpardon'd. But undoubtedly the Expression, a *wounded Spirit*, in that place signifies the Spirits being extreamly cast down, or broken, with any Trouble whatsoever, whether it be this that they speak of, (to wit, Trouble for Sin) or any other.

Of a fear'd Conscience there is mention, 1 Tim. 4. 2. *Having their own Conscience fear'd with an hot Iron.* They have brought their Conscience to that pass, that it feels no more than any part of their Body would, after its being fear'd with an hot Iron. By a long-continu'd Custom of Sin they have so harden'd themselves, that they have not the least feeling of the Wounds that they receive, even by the greatest Sins. They are like him, in Prov. 23. 35. *They have smitten me (says he) and I was not sick, they have beaten me, and I felt it not, or knew it not.* He was so far from feeling it, that he knew nothing of it. And thus it is with these Men, they are altogether past feeling, as the Apostle, Eph. 4. 18, 9. *Because of the Hardness of their Heart being past feeling, they gave themselves over to Lasciviousness, to practise all Uncleaness with greediness.* Tho' they did the vilest things, they were not concern'd,

or touched at all with remorse for them. The contrary to this is a tender Conscience. Such was good *Josiah's*, *Because* (says God to him) *thy Heart was tender, and thou didst humble thy self, and weep before me, when thou heardest what I spake against this place*, 2 Kings 22. 19. Such also was *David's*, 1 Sam. 24. 5, when *his Heart smote him* for cutting off the Skirt of *Saul's* Robe. A little before this, *Saul* barbarously murther'd eighty and five Persons, that did wear a *Linnen Ephod*, as also the Men, Women, Children and Sucklings that dwelt in their City, 2 Sam. 22. 18, 19, and yet his Conscience did not smite him for all this; but *David* felt the Checks and Smitings of Conscience, he griev'd at his Heart (d), when he had only cut off the Skirt of *Saul's* Cloathing.

(a) With Conscience.] *τῇ συνείδησει.*

(b) In truth you are guilty.] *נְקוּשְׁטָא חַיְבִין אַנְתִּנָּא*; *In truth we are Debtors or Sinners*, Chald. So also the Syr. In the 70, instead of *We are guilty*, it is *ἐν ἀμαρτίαις ᾤσμεν*, *We are in Sins*, i. e. guilty of very heinous Sin. It is probable that they took the Hebrew word *אשמים* to be a Noun Substantive.

(c) According to our and other Translations.] Our Translation hath, *The mean while, accusing or excusing one another*; but in the Margin instead of, *The mean while, one another*, we have *Between themselves*; and so the Vulgar and others, *Inter se invicem*; and I see no Reason why we should disallow this Translation; yea, it seems to agree best with *μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων* in the Original.

(d) He griev'd at his Heart.] *חַשׁ דָּו בְּלִבּוֹ*, Chald. in 1 Sam. 24. 5.

C H A P. VI.

Of several other sorts of Conscience.

TO those that I have mention'd, and of which there is express mention in Scripture, Divines have added fundry other sorts of Conscience ; as,

1. The Ignorant Conscience, which hath not its Eyes enlighten'd to judge and discern between Good and Evil, and for want of the Knowledge of the Will of God, cannot perform its Duty as it ought. It is a blind Guide leading the Blind. The Light of the Body is the Eye ; and Conscience, which is the Eye of the Soul, should be the Light of it : But when Conscience is ignorant, the Light that is in the Soul is Darkness. Such a Conscience can perhaps espy some very heinous or notorious Sins, but other Sins it swallows without discerning them at all. If its Eyes were open'd, as the Eyes of *Elisha's* Servant were, it would see Armies and Legions of Sins, when now it discovers few or none.

2. The Erring Conscience, which gives a wrong Judgment, doth not judge as the thing is, puts Evil for Good, and Good for Evil,
doth

doth not judge aright, either of our Estate, or of our Duty ; either of the Lawfulness of Things, or their Unlawfulness.

3. The Doubting Conscience, which inclines or assents to neither part, it cannot say either that the thing is true, or that it is false ; either that it ought, or ought not to be done, but hangs, as it were, in the middle.

4. That which they call (how properly I shall not determine) a Probable Conscience, when the thing seems probable, yet we are not fully perswaded in our Conscience concerning it. As we say in common Speech, *I think the Thing is so*, but am not certain of it, it may prove otherwise. It differs from the Doubting Conscience thus ; the Doubtful Conscience inclines to neither part, but this Probable Conscience inclines to the one part, suppose that the Thing is true, or that it ought to be done, but not without some Fear or Suspicion of the contrary ; to wit, that it may not be true, or that it cannot lawfully be done. The Doubting Conscience considers the Arguments on both sides, and dares not, or cannot chuse either : The Probable Conscience chuseth one side, but not without some Suspicion that it doth not chuse right.

5. The Scrupulous Conscience, which fears or suspects that the doing such a thing is sinful, or that he judgeth amiss, when he hath no Grounds (or only very slight and inconsiderable

derable ones) for such a Suspicion. His Judgment or Belief is built upon a good Foundation, but upon some very slight account he dares not trust to it. He dares not rely upon that which he cannot but believe, there being no Ground for that Fear, or only such as is altogether trifling. Such a *Conscience* is a Companion of Melancholy, which makes Men to fear that they do err, only because they know that they know that they may err. This Melancholic Disposition, with the Fear attending it, betrays the Succours of their Reason.

6. The Secure Conscience, which fears no Evil, when there is the greatest Reason that can be to fear it. It suffers Men to go on in their Sins, without giving them any manner of disturbance. It tells them, that there is Peace and Safety, when they may expect Destruction to come upon them suddenly, as Travel upon a Woman with Child. This *Conscience* differs much from a *Conscience* peaceably good, for here is no true Peace, (*No Peace, says my God, to the Wicked, Isa. 48. 22. & 57. 21.*) it is not a Peace, but only a Truce that they enjoy, and when the time of the Truce is ended, they may expect that *Conscience* will assault them more fiercely. *Sin lies at the door, Gen. 4. 7,* and tho' it seem to sleep at present, it will awake one time or other. An ancient Writer tells us when it will awake most certainly, if it do not sooner, to wit, at the last Judgment; for, instead of, *Sin lies at the Door,* he

he hath, *Thy Sin is reserv'd to the Day of Judgment*. Prosperity, or abundance of Business, or pleasant Company, may cast Men into a Spirit of Slumber, and they may put the Evil Day far from them; but this Calm will certainly end in a Storm, tho' they be secure, they are not safe, their Condemnation sleepeth not tho' they do.

7. The Dull and Drowsie Conscience, which does somewhat of its Duty, but so dully, after such a drowsie, sluggish manner, that no amendment follows. King *Agrippa's* Conscience, *Acts* 26. 28. was such: It told him that *St. Paul's* Discourse had made it clear, that he ought to become a Christian; but it did it so dully, so sleepily, that he was only almost persuaded (b): *Thou almost (or a little) persuadest me to be a Christian*, says he to *St. Paul*: Whereas if Conscience had done its Duty in such sort as it ought, he might have been (not half persuaded, but) wholly brought over to the Faith of Christ. This Conscience is sometimes awak'd, but presently returns to its former sleepiness. Thus it was with *Felix*, when upon *St. Paul's* reasoning of *Righteousness*, and *Temperance* or *Chastity*, (c) and then clapping in with *Judgment to come*, he trembled, *Acts* 24. 25. His Conscience (it seems) was thoroughly awak'd, and told him, that he had liv'd in all Unrighteousness and Lust, or Lasciviousness, (d) and how great reason he had to fear that dreadful Judgment, and yet it fell asleep quickly again. *Saul's* Conscience was also awak'd

wak'd for the present, when he said to *David*, *Thou art more righteous then I*, 1 Sam. 24. 17. *And I have sinned*, &c. Chap. 26. 21. and yet it speedily return'd to its wonted sleepy Condition ; for he did not leave off persecuting *David*, until he heard that he was fled to *Gath* : See Chap. 27. 4.

8. The stupid, or stupified Conscience. This they make to be a degree above a dull, or drowsie Conscience, and the next degree to a seared Conscience. The dull or drowsie Conscience doth something of its Duty in accusing for Sins past, (e) and withholding from Sin, and stirring up to the doing Good for the time to come, tho' it doth it very heavily and sluggishly ; but this stupified Conscience doth nothing of its Duty, doth not accuse at all, unless for very heinous and horrid Sins indeed, or when it feels the Smart of some extraordinary Plagues or Judgments. *Pharaoh* was an Example of this : He was not brought to a Sense and Confession of his heinous Sin, in hardening his Heart against the Lord, and being disobedient to his Command ; and asking, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his Voice, and let Israel go ?* Exod. 5. 2. until he had felt the heavy Stroke of sundry most dreadful Plagues. Then at last he confess'd, *I have sinned, the Lord is righteous, I and my People are wicked*, Exod. 9. 27. This is also call'd a benumm'd Conscience.

Other sorts of Conscience might have been added, as a Pharisaical Conscience, that strains
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at a Gnat, and swallows a Camel, that can endure a Beam in its own Eye, and yet not a Mote in another's Eye. So they tell of a perverse Conscience, of a regenerate and unregenerate Conscience, of a Legal and Evangelical Conscience, of a presuming and despairing Conscience, of a Conscience too strait or narrow, when Men think that they Sin in every thing, and a Conscience too wide and large, which can swallow the grossest Sins without any trouble, &c. but I shall not enlarge upon these.

(a) Thy Sin is reserved to the Day of Judgment.] So the Chaldee Paraphrast, or Targum Onkelos, ליום תטאך נטיך לזנא.

(b) Thou almost, or a little persuadest me.] ἐν ὀλίγῳ πείθεις.

(c) Temperance or Chastity.] ἐγκρατείας, that is, *Continence*, and may denote Chastity, as well as Temperance in Meats and Drinks.

(d) All Unrighteousness, and Lust or Lasciviousness.] Tacitus, *Histor.* l. 5. says of Felix, that *per omnem servitiam ac libidinem jussu regium servili ingenio exercuit*, as *Annal.* l. 12. he says of him, *Cuncta malefacta sibi impune ratus.*

(e) Accusing for Sins past, and withholding from Sin for the time to come.] When Conscience performs its Duty, *Es præterita peccata punit, & punienda committere refugit*, according to St. Bernard, l. de Conscient.

C H A P. VII.

Some Cases or Questions concerning an Erring Conscience.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether do we sin, if we do any thing against Conscience, when it is in an Error?

Answ. We do sin. An Erring Conscience binds so far, that we cannot go against it, and be guiltless. If Conscience judge a thing to be evil (tho' falsely) we sin, and offend against the Majesty of God, if we do it. Those among us, that hold it unlawful to Swear, do sin if they do swear, not in swearing simply (for the Christian Religion doth not forbid them to swear when the Magistrate commands them, provided they do it in Righteousness, Judgment and Truth) but in swearing against the Persuasion of their Conscience. The Reason is, because if I do that which my Conscience tells me the Law of God forbids, or if I do not that which it tells me, that the Law of God commands, I do certainly slight the Authority of the Lawgiver. When my Conscience says, that God hath commanded me to do this, and shun that (tho' indeed he hath commanded neither) if I do not the one, and
shun

shun not the other, it is manifest, that I despise that which I believe to be God's Command. He must needs be concluded to despise the Law, and to slight the Authority of the Maker of it, that doth that which he in his Conscience judges to be contrary to that Law, tho' he be mistaken in that Judgment.

Qu. 2. Whether may a Man be bound to do according to an erring Conscience, so that if he do not, he sins?

Ans. w. He may. As if he judge that Scripture to be truly Canonical, and the Word of God which is not, so long as he continues in this Mistake, he is bound to yield the same Belief, Obedience, and Reverence to it, which he ought to yield to those that are indeed the Word of God; and he sins if he do not. So she that believes a Man to be her lawful Husband, must love, honour, and obey him as her Husband, so long as she knows not the contrary; tho' the Truth is, that he is not her lawful Husband, but the Husband of another Woman, whom he had marry'd before he married her. Many other Instances may be given of this.

Qu. 3. If a Man thro' mistake judge that the Law of God requires him to do something, or to refrain from it, when it indeed doth not, what is he to do in this case?

Ans. w. It is to be consider'd, whether that, which he through mistake judges himself bound by the Law of God to do, be lawful
or

or unlawful : 1. If it be lawful, undoubtedly he ought to follow Conscience, and to do according to that which it requires, tho' it errs in telling him, that he is bound by the Law of God to do it. Some weak Christians in the Apostles time thought themselves bound to abstain from some kinds of Meats, in which they greatly erred (for *Meat commendeth not us to God, neither if we eat are we the better, or if we eat not, the worse*, 1 Cor. 8. 8. and *every Creature of God is good, and none is to be refus'd, being receiv'd with Thanksgiving*, 1 Tim. 4. 4. yea, *God created them to be receiv'd*, v. 3.) yet as long as they continu'd in that Error, they were to abstain from those Meats. Because, tho' they had not really disobey'd the Law of God in eating, yet they verily believ'd in their Conscience, that they should have disobey'd his Law, if they had eaten. 2. If on the other hand, that which his erring Conscience saith, that he ought to do be unlawful, he certainly sins if he do it, as will appear in the Answer to the next Question.

Qⁿ. 4. Whether may not a Man through the Error of his Conscience be under a necessity of sinning, whether he do the thing which his Conscience judges that he ought to do, or doth it not ?

Ans^w. Yes, as in the Case last mention'd. He whose Conscience errs so unhappily, that it judges, that he ought to do that which is unlawful, is under a necessity of sinning, whether

ther he do the thing, or do it not: 1. If he do it not, he goes against his Conscience; which saith, that it is the Will or Commandment of God, that he should do it: And he cannot go against his Conscience, and be guiltless, as hath been shew'd in the Answer to the first Question. While Men continue in their Error, they suppose that their Conscience doth not err, but judges aright; and consequently they suppose, that it is really the Will and Commandment of God, that they should do that which their Conscience requires them to do; and if they do it not, they neglect to do that which (as they believe) God doth command them, and in neglecting to do it they sin. 2. On the other hand, when his erring Conscience tells any Man, that he ought to do that which is unlawful, or which God hath forbid him, if he do it, he also sins. Thus the *Jews* offended God most grievously in killing the Lord of Life, and his Apostles, tho' their Conscience told them, that they did God good Service in it. When God forbids that which Conscience through Error commands, Men certainly sin if they obey the Commands of Conscience, tho' true it is, that they sin also if they do not obey them. So that in this Case, they cannot avoid Sin, whether they follow Conscience, or do not follow it: If they do follow it, they do that which God forbids; if they do not follow it, they neglect to do that which they believe to be God's Command. If they follow it, they sin by going against, or transgressing the Law of God;
if

if they do not follow it, they sin by going against the Judgment of their own Conscience. The *Galatians* that were persuaded by false Teachers, that they ought to be Circumcised, seem to have been in this unhappy Condition. If they were not circumcised, they sinn'd by omitting that which their Conscience told them, that they were bound to do by the Law of God. If they were circumcised, the Apostle tells them, That *Christ would profit them nothing*, Gal. 5. 2. and that they would *make themselves Debtors to do the whole Law*, Ver. 3. and they must of necessity sin in putting themselves into so sad an Estate. He, whose erring Conscience tells him, that God hath forbid that which he in truth commands, is under the same unhappy necessity of sinning, whether he do it or do it not : If he do it not, he sins, because he obeys not God's Command : If he do it, he sins in doing that which he believes God to have forbid, tho' indeed, he hath not forbid it. The like may be said of those, who judge the Things commanded by their Superiors in Church or State, to be unlawful, and forbidden of God, when they are not. If they do these things, they sin in doing that which they through the Error of Conscience believe to be forbidden by God : If they do them not, they sin in disobeying the lawful Command of their Superiors.

Qn. 5. Some ask, how it can be consistent with the Equity of God's Law, that Men should be thus under a necessity of sinning, so that

that whether they follow Conscience, or follow it not, they sin.

Ans. 1. If this necessity of sinning was from the Law of God, if his Law did forbid both that which we do when we follow Conscience, and also that which we do when we do not follow it, then it was not equal. But it is not so, for the Law of God forbids only that which we do when we obey the Command of Conscience, not that also which we do when we disobey its Commands. When we disobey its Command, we do not sin as doing that which is forbidden by God ; the Sin is only in the Manner of doing, because we do against the Judgment or Persuasion of our own Conscience.

2. As it appears, that this necessity is not from the Law of God, so it will easily appear, that it is from our selves ; and therefore, we must not complain of the Law, that it is not equal, but lay the Fault upon our selves. It was through our own default, that Conscience was first led into Error, and it is our own fault, that it continues in it. By suspecting our selves, and giving ear to the Admonitions of others, by Inquiry and Prayer, we might discover our Error, and so lay it aside ; and then we should be no longer intangled with this necessity of sinning. So long as Conscience continues in its erring Persuasion, we have two Masters commanding contrary things, Conscience commands that which God forbids ; but when its Error is discover'd and corrected, God and Conscience come to be in
E effect

effect but one Master, for they now teach one and the same thing. In a word, this unhappy necessity of sinning is not absolute, but only so long as we remain in Error, which we need not do, but may by the Means fore-mention'd discover it, and so lay it down.

Qu. 6. Whether can the Error of Conscience cause such a Change, as that things otherwise good and lawful become unlawful and evil, or on the other side, that which is otherwise unlawful and evil becomes lawful?

Ans. 1. It is not the Power of any Persuasion of Conscience to alter things so, but that every thing that was good still remains good, and every thing that was evil remains evil, and that in the same degree of good and evil; that is, it remains neither better nor worse than it was before. 2. Notwithstanding this, (a) a Man's Conscience or Judgment may make that which is good and lawful in it self, to become sinful and unlawful to him. We have the Apostle's Authority for it: *I know, and am persuaded, that nothing is unclean of itself, but if any one esteem it to be unclean, to him it is unclean*, Rom. 14. 14. His erring Belief, or Persuasion makes that to be unclean and unlawful to him, which is not so in it self. 3. But it will not follow on the other hand, that it is in the Power of any Man's Judgment or Conscience to make that which is unlawful in it self, to become lawful to him.

Men

Men must not flatter themselves, or vainly Dream, that any one of the things which *S. Paul* condemns in the Heathens, *Rom.* 1. 29. or reckons up as Works of the Flesh, *Gal.* 5. 19, 20, 21. will become lawful to him, if he judge it to be lawful. No Error of Conscience can alter the Nature of that which is in itself evil. Sin is sin, and so remains notwithstanding any contrary Persuasion of Conscience, as evil will remain evil, though Conscience say a thousand times, that it is not evil.

Qu. 7. Whether doth it always hold true, that we sin when we follow Conscience telling us, that we may, or ought to do that which is forbidden and unlawful?

Ans. I conceive, that there are none who will deny, that if our own Sin and Negligence was the Cause of the Error, if either we neglected the Means of having our Conscience rightly instructed, or God by way of punishment for some sin of ours suffer'd us to be mislead, or our own Interest, Partiality, or Prejudice drew us into the Error, we certainly sin, if we do in this case follow Conscience. But there are, who say, that if it be not our fault, but Conscience is innocently and unavoidably misguided, if we have done our best to prevent or remedy it, and no sin of ours was the Cause of it, then there is no sin, either in the Error, or in following Conscience erring. Now perhaps we need not to

trouble our selves much about it, whether this be true or no ; for these Men cannot but confess, that it is very rarely, that it is not our fault, that Conscience is mislead ; they are very few that will presume to say, that they have committed no Sin, which might provoke God to suffer them to be lead into Error, or that they have done their best to have Conscience rightly informed, or that they are in no danger of being drawn aside by Prejudice, Partiality, their Interest, or the like ; so that if it was true, that they who err not through their own fault, do not sin in following Conscience erring, it would be the Case of very few, the most falling into Error, through their own neglect or default, in one kind or other. Yet I grant, that the more diligent we are to prevent the being lead into Error, and the more sincerely we have endeavour'd to have our Consciences rightly instructed, we are the more excusable if through Humane Frailty we be mislead, and so follow a misguided Conscience. I grant also, that there may be some Cases, in which it is impossible to know the Truth, we having no means whereby we can discover it. As for Instance, An Estate was unjustly got, and is left to one who knows not that it was got so, but hath good reason to believe, that it was not, because he never heard any one accuse him that got it of unjust Dealing ; in this Case it is not his fault, that he knows not the Truth, and so it is not his fault that Satisfaction is not made to the

Heirs

Heirs and Executors of those that were wronged by that Person, who left him the Estate.

Qu. 8. When Conscience errs about things indifferent, that is, things neither commanded nor forbidden, what is to be done ?

Ans. The Rule concerning Things indifferent, is this, (*b*) *Conscience erring concerning them, whether in commanding, or forbidding them, doth bind so, that we sin if we go against it.* If Conscience command a thing indifferent, that is, if it say, that God by his Law hath commanded it, tho' he hath not, we sin if we do it not ; and so if it forbid such a thing, that is, if it tells us, that God's Law forbids it, tho' it doth not, we sin if we do it. So that the Error of Conscience may make a thing indifferent in it self, to be either necessary or unlawful to us.

(*a*) A Man's Conscience or Judgment may make that which is good and lawful in itself, to become sinful and unlawful to him.] *Opinio nostra ipsa sibi legem facit*, S. Ambros. de Paradiso, c. 8.

(*b*) Conscience erring concerning things indifferent, whether in commanding or forbidding doth bind ?] See *Aquinas*, 1, 2^a. q^a. 19. *Art.* 5.

C H A P. VIII.

Questions concerning a Doubting
C O N S C I E N C E.

Qⁿ. 1. **I**N the Case of the doubting Conscience, what is to be done?

Ans^w. Two Rules may be laid down here.
1. In doubtful Cases, that which is more safe is to be chosen, that is, we must chuse to do that in the doing whereof there is no danger of our sinning: They instance commonly in Usury. If a Man doubt whether he can lawfully take any Increase, his safest Course, (say they) is not to take; for (say they) he is certain, that there is danger of his sinning in not taking, but he is not certain, that he shall not sin if he do take. The like may be said in the Case of the weak Christians, in the time of the Apostles, who doubted, whether they might eat certain Meats; it was their safe way not to eat them, for they were certain, that they could not sin in abstaining; but not being fully instructed as to our Christian Liberty, they doubted that they should sin if they did eat. It is commonly said, and every one must allow, that it is true, That of Evils, the least is always to be chosen (*a*); and so if there

there be two Things, the one of which we must do, and we doubt that we shall sin in doing either of them ; in this Case we must chuse that which we conceive to be the less Sin (*b*) ; the less Evil here puts on the Nature of Good. As suppose a Judge be doubtful, whether the Person that is before him be guilty or innocent, and yet he must either clear or condemn him ; in this Case, it is judg'd to be the safer to acquit or clear him, than to condemn him : For it seems to be a less Sin to acquit a guilty Person, than to condemn an innocent. And therefore, he should chuse to offend on this side, as the very Heathens have taught. (*c*) And so as to matter of Opinion, If there be two different Opinions, and I cannot resolve, but am doubtful, whether is to be follow'd ; and if one of them manifestly tends to the promoting true Virtue and Godliness, the bringing more Holiness, and good Living into the World, and discouraging Sin and Wickedness, whereas the other tends rather to the contrary, 'tis safest to incline to that which leads to a godly, righteous, and sober Life, and so I ought to incline to it. 2. The other Rule is, If we doubt that we shall offend God in doing any thing, we must not do it (*d*). An Heathen could say, That *they command well who forbid us to do any thing of which we doubt, whether it be just or unjust* ; adding this Reason, That *Doubting signifies a Thought of Injury* ; that is, when a Man doubts that the thing which he is about to do is unjust, and yet this notwithstanding do it, it

shews that he doth not sufficiently abhor the doing Injury or Injustice. And so as to any other Sin, if a Man doubt or fear, that if he do such a thing he shall sin, and yet doth it, he thereby manifests that he hath not a due Abhorrence of Sin. If we do that which we doubt may offend God, or not be pleasing to him, we manifest that we are not so careful, and desirous to please him, as we ought to be, and as we should be, if we were not defective in our Love to him. Some apply to this, that known Text, *Rom. 14. 23.* which they render thus, *He that doubts is damned if he eat, because he eats not of Faith, for whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin*; and interpret it thus, *Whatsoever is not of Faith*, (that is (say they) whatsoever is done not out of a firm Persuasion that it is lawful) *is sin*. According to which Reading and Interpretation the Apostle plainly confirms the Truth of this Rule. To do that which I doubt may grieve my Friend, or trouble him, cannot consist with an hearty Love of him; and so if I doubt whether a thing be lawful or no, and yet do it, this will argue that I do not love God as I ought. Finally, to do any thing with a doubting Conscience, is to say in effect, I know not but that this which I am about to do may offend God; yea, I have as much reason to think that it will offend him, as to think otherwise, and yet I will do it.

Qu. 2. Whether doth this second Rule, that we must do nothing with a doubting Conscience, or doubting of the Lawfulness of

of that which we do, admit of Exceptions ?

Ans. It doth. 1st, One Exception is mention'd in the Answer to the foregoing Question, where it is said, That in doubtful Cases that which is more safe is to be chosen ; whence it follows, that if there be two things, and we are doubtful as to both of them, we fear that whether we do the one or the other we shall sin, and yet we cannot avoid but we must do the one ; we are in this Case to chuse the less Sin of the two. 2^{dly}, As the more or less heinousness of the Sin is to be consider'd, so we are to have respect to the degrees of Doubting. If of two things I doubt more that I shall sin in doing the one, than I do that I shall sin in doing the other, in this Case, (provided that the Sin in doing them be equal) if I must do the one, I am to chuse that of which I doubt the less. 3^{dly}, To these Divines add another Exception, saying, That if Lawful Authority, Civil or Ecclesiastical, command us to do that, of the Lawfulness whereof we stand in doubt, we are in this Case to do it, notwithstanding our Doubts. But this will be handl'd more largely in the Answer to the next Question.

Qu. 3. When we doubt concerning a Law made by our Superiours, and cannot be satisfied whether it is just or unjust, what are we to do ?

Ans.

Ans. A very judicious Person (e), whose Words I shall transcribe, resolves this Question thus: *If (says he) because of probable Reasons appearing on both sides, the Subject knows not whether the Law be just or unjust, but hangs (as it were) between two, being uncertain to whether part he should incline; he is, in this case, bound to obey the Law, so that he sins if he do not obey it, and sins not if he do.* This he proves from two Rules; 1. *In doubtful Cases the Condition of the Possessor is the better, now the Superiour is in possession of a Right to the Obedience of his Subjects.* 2. *In doubtful Cases the safer part is to be chosen, now it is safer to obey with a doubting Conscience, than to disobey with it.* This he in another place (f) urgeth more largely; *Judge (saith he) whether it be not the safer of the two to obey doubtingly, than to disobey doubtingly. It is St. Gregory's Rule, Where there is a Certainty and an Uncertainty, let the Uncertainty go and hold to that which is certain. Now the general is certain, that thou art to obey the Magistrate in all things not contrary to the Will of God; but the particular is uncertain, whether the thing now commanded be contrary to the Will of God, (uncertain (I say) to thee, because thou doubtest of it): deal safely therefore, and hold to that which is certain, and obey.* A little before he says, *That doubting properly is, when the Mind is held in suspence between two, uncertain whether to take to: And surely where the Scales hang thus even, if the weight of Authority will not cast them either way, we may well suppose, that either the Authority is made very light, or else there is a great Fault in the Beam.*

And

And if in the Deed done at the command of one that hath lawful Authority there be a Sin, it must go on his Score that requireth it wrongfully (g), not on his who doth but his Duty in obeying. A Prince commands his Subjects to serve in his Wars, it may be the Quarrel is unjust; it may be there may appear to the Understanding of the Subject great likelihoods of such Injustice, yet may the Subject, for all that, fight in the Quarrel (h); yea, he is bound in Conscience so to do; nay, he is deep in Disloyalty, if he refuse the Service, whatsoever Pretensions he may make of Conscience for such refusal. Whatsoever is commanded by those whom God hath set over us, either in Church, Commonwealth, or Family, which is not evidently contrary to the Law and Will of God (says St. Bernard) (i) ought to be receiv'd and obey'd by us, no otherwise than as if God himself had commanded it; because God himself hath commanded us to obey the higher Powers, Rom. 13. 1, and to submit our selves to their Ordinances, 1 Pet. 2. 13. Say it be not well done of them to command it, what (says St. Bern.) is that to thee? Let them look to that whom it concerns; do thou what is thine own part faithfully, and never trouble thy self further. God's Vicegerents must be heard or obey'd in all things that are not manifestly contrary to the revealed Will of God: So St. Bernard still. Thus far are the Words of that very judicious Person first mention'd. Others add a third Rule; The Laws (say they) made and urg'd by Superiours are to be obey'd, unless it be as clear to us, that the thing commanded is unlawful, as it is evident in the general that we are to obey Superiours in things lawful. Now as long
as

as we only doubt that the thing commanded is unlawful, it is manifest that it is not clear to us, that it is so. When we are sure of it, that the thing commanded by Men is that which God forbids, we have, in this Case, a certain Direction, *Act. 4. 19*, That we must *obey GOD rather than Men*; but, as long as we are not sure of it, (the Conscience being only doubtful that it is forbidden by God) this will not discharge us from the Duty of obeying the Law made and urged by our Superiours; we not only may with a good Conscience obey it, but we cannot with a good Conscience refuse the obeying it. So long as the unlawfulness of doing the thing commanded by our Superiours is not as evident as the Command to obey them is, we are to obey them. In a word, it being certain that we ought to obey our Superiours if that which they command be not sinful; and, on the other hand, in this Case of a Doubting Conscience there being no Certainty that it is sinful, we may conclude that we must obey. Nor are the words, *He that doubts is damn'd if he eat*, *Rom. 14. 23*, against this, for that of the *Romans*, to whom the Apostle writes, was quite another Case; they were at liberty to eat or not to eat, there was no Law of any Superiour which requir'd them either to eat or to forbear; and so, if doubting its lawfulness they did eat, they could have no Pretence or Excuse for their eating: But here we suppose the Command of a Superiour, by which we are bound, whereas they were free. If we do not obey the lawful

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Command of our Superiour, we disobey the Command of God in disobeying him. I might add, that tho' our Bibles, in the Text, have *He that doubteth is damn'd if he eat*, yet in the Margin, instead of *He that doubteth*, they have *He that discerneth or putteth a Difference between Meats*: And others have likewise so interpreted the Greek word (*k*).

Qu. 4. Whether may Possession prevail and cast the Scales in case of doubt? A Man is possess'd of a Field, to which he enter'd by Inheritance, and wholly without Fraud or Violence, yet afterward he hath some reason to doubt whether it be his by a just Title, or no; what is this Man to do? May he keep Possession, or ought he to quit it?

Ans. To this they say, That he may keep his Possession (*l*) till it be certain that it is not his by a good Title. For (say they) Possession is a kind of Title, whereto we may add the Rule even now mention'd, (*Quest. 3.*) that the Case being otherwise equal, the Condition of him that is in Possession is the better.

Qu. 5. If we doubt whether we did not sin in something done by us, what are we to do?

Ans. In this Case, tho' after a careful and impartial weighing the Arguments, and examining the Evidences on both sides, we cannot come to a certain Resolution either way,
either

either that we did sin therein, or that we did not ; yet it cannot be amiss, yea, it must be safest to express a general Repentance for it, as thus ; *If I did amiss, I am heartily sorry for it, God of his Mercy impute it not to me ; Lord, pardon thy Servant, or the like.* Yea, tho' we hope, and have some reason to think, that we did not offend in it, yet since we are not certain of it, it will be necessary to pray thus.

(a) Of Evils the least is always to be chosen.] *Ab hominibus doctis accepimus ex malis eligere minima oportere.* Cicero de Offic. l. 3. circa init. Perhaps one of these learned Men whom he mentions was Aristotle, who hath these words ; Τα ἐλαχιστα ληπτέον τῶν κακῶν. Ethic. ad Nicom. l. 2, c. 9.

(b) The less Evil here puts on the Nature of Good.] Ἐν ἀγαθῷ λόγῳ γίνεται τὸ ἐλαττον κακὸν πρὸς τὸ μᾶλλον κακὸν. Arist. Ethic. Nicom. l. 5, c. 7. In comparatione malorum boni locum obtinet levius, Quintil. Instit. Orat. l. 7, c. 4. Illa desinunt esse peccata, quæ propter graviora vitanda suscipiuntur, August. de Mendacio, c. 18.

(c) As the very Heathens have taught.] Ἐἰ οὖτοι ἀμαρτῶν ἐπὶ τῷ δικάζον, τὸ ἀδίκως ἀπολῦσαι ὁσιώτερον ἂν ἢ τὸ μὴ δικάως ἀπολῦσαι ; τὸ μὲν γὰρ μόνον ἀμαρτημῶν ἐστὶ, τὸ δὲ ἕτερον καὶ ἀσέβημα, Antiph. in Orat. ὅτε τὸ Ἡρόδοτος φέρει, vers. fin. So in the Problems ascrib'd to Aristotle, sect. 29, Ἐκ τῶν ἡμῶν μᾶλλον ἂν περιέλοιτο τὸ ἀδικῶν ἀποφροῖσθαι ὥς καὶ ἀδικεῖ, ἢ τὸ μὴ ἀδικῶν καταφροῖσθαι ὥς ἀδικεῖ. And a little after this Reason is given, Ἐστὶ γὰρ ὅταν τις ἀμείβοιτο, τὰ ἐλάττω τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων αἰρετίον.

(d) An Heathen could say] Cicero de Offic. l. 1. Non longe ab init. And so the Jewish Writers, רפדת יוד רפדת R. Gamaliel in Pirke Avoth. c. 1, sect. 16.

(e) A very judicious Person.] Bishop Sanderfen, de Obligatione Conscientiæ, Prælect. 6, c. 17.

(f) This

(f) This he in another place.] Bishop Sanderson, *Serm. 4. ad Clerum.*

(g) It must go on his Score who requireth it wrongfully.] Bishop Sanderson, *Serm. 4. ad Cler.* in the Margin alledges these words, out of the Civil Law; *Is damnus dat qui jubet dare, ejus vero nulla culpa est cui parere necesse est*: To which many like Passages might be easily added.

(h) Yet may the Subject, for all that, fight in the Quarrel.] St. Austin's words, *Con. Faustum, l. 22, c. 75*, are very plain to this purpose: *Vir justus, si forte sub Rege etiam Sacrilego militet, recte potest illo jubente bellare, civicae pacis ordinem servans, cui quod jubetur vel non esse contra Dei praeceptum certum est, vel utrum sit certum non est; ita ut fortasse reum Regem faciat iniquitas imperandi, innocentem autem militem ostendat ordo serviendi.* I know that some Protestants of note (as well as Romanists) are not satisfied with this, but their Dissatisfaction seems to arise only from their not considering how great an Evil Disobedience to Authority is. For this is their great Argument, That disobeying Authority in such things, is of its own nature a less Evil than the taking away the Lives of innocent Persons: But they only affirm this, they do not offer the least Proof of it. Besides, in the Case before us it doth not appear to the Doubting Person, that those whose Lives he may take away are innocent; for he is not certain that the War on his Prince's side is unjust, and (if it be not) then they that maintain an unjust Quarrel against him are not innocent. Lastly, they do not consider, that (besides other great Inconveniencies which it might bring upon Princes and their Kingdoms) such Disobedience might occasion the loss of the Lives of many.

(i) Says St. Bernard.] *De praecepto & dispensat. vers. Med.*

(k) Others have likewise so interpreted the Greek word] *Vulg. &c.* And I add, that there are those who interpret that whole Verse, *Rom. 14. 23*, much otherwise than Expositors do usually.

(l) He may keep his Possession, &c.] *In jure praediorum tamdiu quisq; bonae Fidei possessor rectissime dicitur, quamdiu se possidere ignorat alicuiam, S. Aug. de Fide & Oper. c. 7.*

C H A P. IX.

*Questions concerning a Probable, and
also concerning a Scrupulous Con-
science.*

Quest. 1. **W**Hether we do sin if we go
against a Probable Conscience,
(a) or do that which upon Probable Reasons
we judge to be unlawful?

Answ. Yes, we do sin. If we sin in doing
that of which we doubt whether it be law-
ful or unlawful, we certainly sin much more
in doing that which our Conscience, upon
Probable Reasons, judges to be unlawful.
Tho' it be not for necessary, but only Proba-
ble Reasons that we judge any thing to be sin-
ful, yet so long as we continue in that Judg-
ment, we cannot do it without Sin.

Qu. 2. When there are two contrary Opi-
nions concerning any thing, whether are we
in our Practice always to follow that which is
more probable?

Answ. All do grant (as I suppose) that
when having us'd our utmost Diligence to
come

come to a certain Resolution or Persuasion, we cannot attain to it, we may, in most Cases follow the Opinion that is more probable ; but the Question is, Whether in some Cases we may not, yea, we ought not, to follow that which is less probable. In answer to which I say, 1. If the Question be only, whether the Thing be lawful or no, and the Opinion, which is less probable, be safer, that is, there is less danger of our sinning if we follow it, it is our Duty and Wisdom in this Case to follow that which we judge to be less probable. They instance in Interest ; where the Question is, Whether some Interest be not lawful ; and there are contrary Opinions about it, some affirming the Lawfulness of some sort of Interest, others condemning it wholly. Now, suppose that we judge the Opinion of those who allow that some Interest is lawful, to be more probable, yet because we are not certainly perswaded that it is so, it is safest for us to abstain from taking any ; for (say they) we are sure that we cannot sin in abstaining. But, 2. If the Question be, whether the thing ought to be done, or on the contrary it ought not, we must always follow the more probable Opinion ; for here there is not less danger of sinning, and consequently there is not more safety, in following the Opinion which we judge less probable ; as it was in the former Case. We sin if we do that which we ought not to do, and we sin also if we do not that which we ought to do : And therefore the degrees of Safety

here follow the degrees of Probability ; that is, that which we judge more probable we must also judge to be more safe. It is unreasonable to chuse that which we see less reason to chuse : Now, in this case, where that which is less likely is not more safe, there must needs be less reason to chuse the less likely.

Qu. 3. When there are two Opinions equally likely or probable, what must be done ?

Ans. If they be equally safe, as well as equally probable, we may, without scruple, follow either ; there being no reason why we should follow the one rather than the other.

Qu. 4. If there be two Opinions, and we judge both of them improbable, what are we to do ?

Ans. If there be not a third Opinion which seems probable to us, and which we may follow, leaving both these ; or if there be a necessity of following one of them, we must follow that which is less improbable or unlikely.

Qu. 5. In the case of a Scrupulous Conscience, what is to be done ?

Ans. A Scruple (*b*) being only a light Doubt or Fear, having no Ground or Foundation, we are advis'd (if it cannot be remov'd

mov'd otherwise) to neglect it, and proceed to Action, that is, to proceed to do that which we scruple whether it may be done or no. As if, considering our own great Unworthiness, we dare not presume to make known our Requests to God by Prayer, or to approach to receive the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our dear Lord ; we are advis'd, notwithstanding these Scruples, to put our selves upon Prayer, and to prepare our selves for the receiving the holy Sacrament, and so to eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup. In like manner, if we have some Scruples whether we can safely obey some Command of our Superiours, we are in this case to neglect those Scruples, not to neglect our Duty, and refuse to obey. Every such Scruple should be plainly told, that we will not omit our Duty for it. We are advis'd also, as much as we can, to avoid thinking of those things which occasion such groundless Scruples, and not to dispute the Question long with them, whether we may safely do that which we are about or no. We should also pray earnestly unto God, that He will rebuke Satan, and not suffer him to create so much Trouble and Disquiet to us, by casting these Scruples into our Minds. As likewise we should diligently search and examin our selves, to find out the Sin or Sins which may have provok'd God to suffer this Affliction to fall upon us, and repent more earnestly, and be more heartily sorry for them. Also, that we may fear Trifles or Little Things less, let us

fear Great Things more ; yea, let us fear every known Sin, whether small or great. Let us also get our Hearts more firmly establish'd as to that which we are to do, and then not admit every slight and groundless fear of the contrary. And because these Scruples do often arise from Melancholy, it may not be amiss to make use of the proper Remedies for the cure of that Distemper. Lastly, We are advis'd, as much as may be, to avoid the company of Scrupulous Persons.

Qu. 6. When the Conscience is perplex'd betwixt two, so that we think that we shall sin whethersoever of them we do, what is to be done ?

Ans. If we cannot inform and satisfy ourselves, and yet cannot avoid, but we must do one of them, then supposing that we judge that they are equal, or that the one is not a greater Sin than the other, it is indifferent to us whether we do. But if we apprehend a difference between them, we must do that which we judge to be the less Sin.

(a) A Probable Conscience.] It is also call'd *Conscientia opinans*, or *opinabilis*.

(b) A Scruple.] *Scrupulus* is properly a little sharp Stone, which being got into the Shoe hurts the Foot, and is very troublesome to us. And a Scruple in the Mind is no less troublesome ; whence is that of Cicero, *pro Sex Roscio*, circ. init. *Hanc sibi ex animo Scrupulum, qui se dies noctesq; stimulat ac pungit, ac exaltatis postulat.*

CHAP. X.

Of the Happiness and Benefit of a Good Conscience in this Life.

THE Happiness and Benefit of the Enjoyment of a Good Conscience is unspeakable : He that is bless'd with it enjoys a continual Feast, such a Feast as that *Isa. 25. 6. a Feast of fat things, of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.* No Wine or Musick, no Pleasure, Delight, Comfort or Contentment is wanting in this Feast. Nothing yields such abundance of sweetness and Satisfaction to the Mind of Man, as the Conscience of doing Good. Good Company is not wanting, yea, at this Feast there is the best Company, the Company of our dearest Lord himself, who hath said, *If any one hear my voice, (which he that hath a good Conscience doth) I will come in to him, and sup, or feast, with him, and he with me, Revel. 3. 20.* We read in our Bibles, *Prov. 15. 15,* that *He that is of a merry Heart hath a continual Feast ;* but in the Original there is no more than this, *A good Heart is a continual Feast,* (a) and a good Heart is a good Conscience, which banisheth all sadness and heaviness, and makes him that is careful to keep it to rejoyce ever-

more, and to keep a Feast not for a few days, or for an hundred and fourscore days, as *Ahasuerus*, but throughout the whole Year, yea, throughout his whole Life. And the end of this Mirth will not be Heaviness, as the end of the Mirth of other Feasts many times is, for indeed this Mirth (if we take care to preserve a good Conscience) will never end.

We find the Benefit and Happiness of a good Conscience chiefly at those times when we stand most in need of the Comforts of it; as in the time of Affliction or Distress. It is said, *Prov. 15. 15, All the days of the Afflicted are evil, but a good Heart or Conscience is a continual Feast*: as if the Wise-man had said, All the days of the Afflicted are evil, unless he have the Feast of a good Conscience to cheer and relieve him in his Afflictions. In all the Tribulations and Distresses that he underwent, *St. Paul's* rejoicing was this, *the testimony of a good Conscience*, *2 Cor. 1. 12.* Are we imprison'd? A good Conscience will enable us with *Paul* and *Silas* to sing, even when our Feet are hurt in the Stocks, and the Iron enters into our Soul. Have we suffer'd the loss of Estate or Goods? So long as the Treasure of a good Conscience is safe, we are happy enough. Do all Men forsake us, yea, do those whom we look'd upon as our best Friends appear against us? We need not matter who are against us, so long as the Testimony of our Conscience stands for us (*b*). Do Men reproach us (*c*)? We need not regard it, if our own Heart or Conscience do not re-

reproach us. *St. Paul* had foul things laid to his charge ; *We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition, say the Jews,* by their Orator *Tertullius, Act. 24. 5.* But the Apostle could truly say, *v. 16, I exercise myself to have always a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men ;* and so their malicious Accusations did not at all move him. He *knew nothing by himself,* and therefore he regarded not the Censures of others, *1 Cor. 4. 3, 4.* A good Conscience carried him thro' evil Report, as well as good. As the Praises of others cannot heal a bad Conscience (*d*), so their Reproaches cannot wound or hurt a good one. A Conscience that knows nothing by itself, laughs at all the false Reports that Fame (*e*) can spread abroad of us : It matters not how much it may debase us, if our Witness and Judge within us (*f*) (to wit, our Conscience) do defend or vindicate us. In times of common Fears and publick Calamities, when Wars and Rumors of Wars affright others, and make that their Hearts fail them for fear, he that hath a good Conscience will not be terrified ; he will not be afraid of evil Tydings, for his Heart is fixed, and trusteth in the Lord. How high soever the Waters of any Flood of *Common Calamities* may rise, a good Conscience, like *Noah's Ark,* carrieth him above them. In Sicknes if we have a good Conscience to minister to us ; if Conscience be sound and healthy, tho' the Body languish ; if we have this Cordial to strengthen us when we lye upon our sick Bed ; we shall bear the

Affliction not only patiently, but also comfortably. In Old-age, when we may be said to walk in the Valley of *the shadow of Death*, a good Conscience will be a Staff to uphold and comfort us. When we cannot taste what we eat, or what we drink, when we cannot hear the Voice of Singing-men or Singing-women, a good Conscience will be instead of all Dainties and Delights to us. How many hath a good Conscience enabled to triumph over the greatest Extremity of Tortures (*g*)? The greatest Torments are easie where there are answerable Comforts, where there is such a Comforter as a good Conscience. In a word, in all Distresses whatsoever, in the failure of all other Comforts, in the presence of the greatest Discomforts and Discouragements, a good Conscience will not fail nor forsake us, but stick close and be a sure Friend to us: It will, with *Simon of Cyrene*, bear every Cross for us.

All this time I have insisted only on the Joy and Comfort of a good Conscience, but the Benefit of it is also unspeakable other ways. If we have a good Conscience, we shall not want a Preacher in our own Bosoms, a Preacher of Righteousness, one that will preach the Truth, and nothing but the Truth, to us; one that we cannot suspect to be partial, or set on by others, or to preach any thing out of Malice or Ill-will to us. He that hath a good Conscience will not want a faithful Monitor to instruct and teach him in the way that he should walk, to warn him

him that he turn not to the Right Hand, or to the Left, one that will instruct him in the right Season (*b*). Having a good Conscience, we should not want a Glass, wherein we might see both our inward and our outward Man, which would shew us what is honest, and what is dishonest, what is befitting or unfitting, what is to be done or not to be done. Being careful to get and keep a good Conscience, we should not want that, which many want, and are very unhappy in their want thereof, that is, a Reprover. There cannot be a greater Happiness, than a *wise Reprover upon an obedient Ear, or an hearing Ear, Prov. 25. 12. it is as an Ear-ring of Gold, and an Ornament of fine Gold, as is there said.* Now a good Conscience is a wise Reprover, and would make us wise too, if we would lend an hearing Ear to its Reproofs: *Let the Righteous smite me, it shall be a Kindness, let him reprove me, it shall be an Head Oyl (that is, a chief, or most excellent Oyl) which shall not break mine Head; so the Psalmist, Psal. 141. 5.* The Smitings and Reproofs of a good Conscience, are such a precious Oyl or Balm, so far from breaking the Head, that they are the great Cure of our spiritual Wounds and Bruises. Finally, getting and keeping a good Conscience, we shall not want an Inciter, or Stirrer up to the doing Good, a Cherisher and Encourager in the doing it, and Praiser or Commender of us for the doing it; as on the other hand, it would restrain and withhold us from Evil, check, damp, and discourage

rage us in the committing it, as it would accuse, chastise and lash us for the committing it. These and many others are the incomparable Benefits of a good Conscience in this Life.

(a) A good Heart is a continual Feast.] טוב לך משתה חמיר.

(b) So long as the Testimony of our Conscience stands for us.] *Si in eis, quibus me criminantur, testimonium Conscientie meae non stat contra me, non solum contristari non debeo, sed etiam gaudere & exultare, S. August. con. lit. Petiliani, l. 3. c. 6.*

(c) Do Men reproach us, &c.] *Nullius nos ibi lingua implicet, ubi Conscientia non accusat, Gregor. Epist. ex Reg. l. 6. c. 178. Non possunt aliena verba crimen affigere, quod propria non recepit Conscientia, S. Ambros. in Psal. 38. Beata plane, quae non alienis aestimatur iudiciis, sed domesticis percipitur sensibus, tanquam sui Iudex, Id. de Offic. l. 2. c. 1.*

(d) As the Praises of others cannot heal a bad Conscience, &c.] *Ita nec malam Conscientiam sanat praeconium laudantis, nec bonam vulnerat convitiantis opprobrium, S. August. con. lit. Petil. l. 3. c. 7.*

(e) Laughs at the false Reports of Fame.] *Bene sibi conscius falsis moveri non debet, nec aestimare plus ponderis in alieno esse convitio, quam in suo testimonio, S. Ambros. de Offic. l. 1. c. 5.*

(f) If our Witness and Judge within us, &c.] *In omni quod de nobis dicitur, semper taciti recurrere debemus ad mentem, & internam testem & iudicem requirere. Quid enim proderit, si omnes laudent cum conscientia accuset? aut quid poterit obesse, si omnes derogent & Conscientia sola defendat, Gregor. in Ezek. hom. 9.*

(g) To triumph over the greatest Extremity of Tortures.] *Omnis nobis utilis est pena, ubi pura comes est Conscientia, Tiburtius a Martyr. ap. Baron. An. Dom. 286.*

(h) We

(h) We should not want a Glass.] *In speculo Conscientie status interioris & exterioris hominis cognoscitur. Anima namque novit se quae sine speculo est. Non immerito Conscientiam speculo comparavit, quoniam in ea tanquam speculo rationis oculus tam indecens quam quod decens in se est claro aspectu apprehendere potest, D. Bernard de Conscient.*

(i) An obedient, or an hearing Ear.] **אזן שמעך.**

(k) An head Oyl.] **שמן ראש.**

CHAP.

C H A P. XI.

The Happiness of having a good Conscience at the Approach of Death, also at and after the Judgment of the Great Day.

AS the Benefit and Comfort of a good Conscience is unspeakable, yea unconceivable in Life, so it is likewise in and after Death. The Conscience of a well-spent Life will administer Comfort in Death. He that can truly say with *Hezekiah*, (*Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in Truth, and with a perfect Heart, and done that which is good in thine Eyes, Isai. 38. 3.*) may depart in Peace. Conscience in Life is the Way to Comfort, in the Hour of Death. He that lives in all good Conscience all the Days of his appointed time 'till his Change come, may expect to depart with abundance of Comfort when it comes. When this Earthly Tabernacle shall be just ready to be dissolv'd, and Speech shall fail, and the Shadow of Death shall be upon our Eyes, who, or what can avail like a good Conscience? When our dearest Friends or Relations shall stand over us weeping and wailing, and

and breaking our Hearts, if Conscience be our Friend, it will even then fill us with Joy and Peace in believing, that we shall abound in Hope, through the Power of the Holy Ghost. Finally, that the Conscience of a well-pass'd Life hath such force to enable us not to fear Death, but to look that King of Terrors undauntedly in the Face, we have an whole Cloud of Witnesses, even the Noble Army of Martyrs, from *S. Stephen* to our glorious Martyr, King *Charles* the First, or any that have suffer'd since in any part of the World.

Inestimable also is the Benefit of a good Conscience after Death. At the Last Day, yea and after it, it will befriend us. When Men die in the Lord, their Works follow them (that is, to Judgment, which comes after Death) and so the Conscience of their good Works likewise doth. There when they have neither Friend, nor Counsel, nor Money to plead for them, a good Conscience will. Amidst all the Terrors of Judgment it will enable them to look up and lift up their Heads, and to stand with a chearful Confidence before the Son of Man. Others will shake and tremble for fear of the Judge, as the Keepers did for fear of the Angel, *S. Mat. 28. 4.* but a good Conscience will say to them, as the Angel said then to the Women, *Fear not ye (a).*

To go one step further, After that a good Conscience hath befriended us not only in Life, but also in the Hour of Death, and at the Day of Judgment, it will not leave us still, but continue for ever with us. They tell us, that

Faith

Faith and Hope shall cease (and it is true, that they shall cease in part) but a good Conscience will abide, and as it was an Heaven upon Earth to us, so it will be no small part of our Happiness in that Heaven which is prepared for us. The Feast of a good Conscience is no small part of that Fulness of Joy, of those Pleasures for evermore, which we shall enjoy in the Presence, and at the Right Hand of God. The Presence, Vision, and Fruition of the Ever-blessed Trinity will be our principal Happiness in Heaven, but the Company of Angels, and Saints, and of a good Conscience will be no small Accession.

(a) Fear not ye.] *Nihil est jucundius, nihil securius bona Conscientia. Secura erit cum corpus morietur, secura cum anima coram Deo presentabitur, secura cum utrumque in die Judicii ante terrificum tribunal Judicis statuetur, D. Bernard, de Conscient.*

C H A P. XII.

The Benefit of a good Conscience, in respect of the Welfare of the Church and State.

I Have treated hitherto of the unconceivable Happiness of the Man that is blest'd with this precious Treasure, a good Conscience, but the Benefit of it reacheth further to others also. All that are about him are happy in the Neighbourhood of such a Man. If there was nothing else, his Example (if they be not wanting to themselves) may be beneficial to them. But beside this, such a Man may draw down Blessings upon the Place, Town, or City, in which he lives, or avert Judgments from it. As if Ten righteous Persons had been found in *Sodom*, God would have spar'd all the City, and not have destroy'd it for their sake.

And then if all would be persuaded to study to get and keep a good Conscience, how happy Families, Corporations, Kingdoms, how flourishing a Church should we have? No Project can be set on foot for promoting the Happiness

piness of a Kingdom like to this, the setting
 up a good Conscience. It would banish all
 Oppression, Unrighteousness, Bribery, Whore-
 dom, Drunkenness, Prophaning the Name of
 God by Swearing, Cursing, and the like, get-
 ting Estates by Deceit, Couzenage, and Ly-
 ing, and other Sins, which are wont to bring
 down the Judgments of God upon Kingdoms.
 A good Conscience would charge the Poor not
 to put forth the Hand to steal, but while
 they have Strength to labour with their
 Hands, and also to seek to be rich in Faith,
 that they may be Heirs of the Kingdom which
 God hath promis'd to them that love him. It
 would charge the Rich not to be High-mind-
 ed, nor to trust in uncertain Riches, but in
 the living God; to do good, to be rich in
 good Works, ready to Distribute, willing to
 Communicate, treasuring up to themselves a
 good Foundation for the time to come. It
 would charge Tradesmen not to put off adul-
 terate Wares, not to take Advantage of the
 Buyer's Simplicity, and not to use false
 Weights and Measures, or deceiptful Balances,
 but to be true and just in all their Dealings,
 lest the flying Roll or Curse mention'd, *Zach.*
 5. 2, 3. enter into their House, and consume
 it with the Timber of it, and the Stones of
 it. Those that have defrauded or wrong'd
 any, it would charge faithfully to make Re-
 stitution of that which they have got wrong-
 fully, assuring them that they must expect no
 Forgiveness from God without this. It would
 preach

preach to Ministers, and tell them, that they above others should be Men of Conscience, and take care that they preach sound Doctrine, and divide the Word of God aright, being instant in season, and out of season, and that they do not disturb the Church's Peace, by broaching new and singular Opinions, and that they teach their People to study to be quiet, and do their Business, and obey them that have the Rule over them. It would preach to the Right Reverend Fathers of the Church the Bishops, that they lay Hands suddenly on no Man, but faithfully and wisely make Choice of fit Persons to serve in the Ministry ; as also, to take heed to all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them Overseers. To Judges and Justices, it would give such a Charge, as good *Jehoshaphat* did, 2 *Chron.* 19. 9, 10. It would preach to Lawyers and Attornies, to use Conscience in their Practice, to be Eyes to the Blind, to plead for the Widow and Fatherless, and deliver the Poor when he cryeth. It would call upon the Gentry, after the Example of our Ancestors, to dwell in the Country, and keep Hospitality, and maintain Peace among their Tenants, and be Examples of Virtuous and Godly Living to them. It would be at Council-boards, and sit at Council there ; and happy were it, if this good Conscience did always preside and moderate in their Councils. It would preach to Nobles and great Courtiers, *That it is bet-*

ter to trust in the Lord, than to put Confidence in the favour of Princes; to remember that Virtue is the only true Nobility, and that the higher they are exalted in Honour, Dignity and Place, they should excel others the more in Godly Lives, Generous Deeds, and Virtuous Actions. Lastly, This good Conscience will speak of God's Commandments, even unto Kings, and tell them, That they ought not to turn aside from them to the Right Hand, or to the Left; that their Hearts should not be lifted up above their Brethren, but they should learn to fear the Lord their God, and that to that purpose they should read in the Book of the Law of the Lord all the Days of their Life, Deut. 17. 19, 20.

To conclude this, a good Conscience would preach thus to Persons of all Degrees, Conditions and Professions, stirring them up faithfully to discharge the Duties which their Place, or Calling, or Relation requires of them. It would preach to Parents and Children, Husband and Wife, Masters and Servants, and press them to perform those Duties to each other, which the Apostle doth, *Ephes. Chap. 5, and 6. Colos. Chap. 3, and 4.* It would preach to Superiors, Inferiors, and Equals, directing every one of them, how to carry to each other, and so there would be no Discord or Discontent, but the Golden Age would return, and Innocence with its Attendant Happiness would once more visit the Earth, which it long since left; and *Isaiah's*

Isaiah's Prophecies would be fulfill'd, That Men should not hurt, nor destroy, Isai. 11. 9. In a word, if all would be careful to get and keep a good Conscience, it would make a wonderful Reformation, as in Families, so in more publick Societies, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil. It would set right whatsoever may be amiss, either in Church or State.

C H A P. XIII.

— *The Unhappiness of an Evil*
C O N S C I E N C E.

TO satisfy us of the Unhappiness of the Man, who hath an evil Conscience, more needs not be said than this, that they want the innumerable Benefits and Advantages, the unconceivable Comfort and Happiness of a good one. But as he is unhappy in respect of this, so also by reason of the Fear, Perplexity, Disquiet and Torment which he endures (if Conscience be awak'd) even in this present Life. Fear doth constantly attend upon an evil Conscience awak'd. The World had very early Examples of the Truth of this. No sooner did an evil Conscience come into the World, but Fear entred with it. When our first Parents had sinn'd in eating the forbidden Fruit, they for fear sought to hide themselves among the Trees of the Garden. Likewise *Cain* having slain his Brother *Abel*, fear'd that every one that found him would kill him, *Gen. 4. 14.* And some seem to have thought, that the Mark which God set upon *Cain*, *ver. 15.* was a continual Trembling (*a*). An evil Conscience hath made them to fear, of whom all others have stood in fear, even the most
bar-

barbarous Tyrants (*b*). Yea, if Conscience be awak'd indeed, Terrors make them afraid on every side ; so that they may be call'd (as *Pashur* was) *Magor-missabib* ; that is, Fear round about, *a Terror to themselves, and all their Friends*, Jer. 20. 3, 4.

As Fear, so also *Restlessness* and *Disquiet* is a constant Companion of an evil Conscience. *The Wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest*, Isa. 57. 20. And why can they not rest ? because they want the Peace of a good Conscience, as it is in v. 21. *There is no Peace to the Wicked, says my God.*

Fear causeth *Disquiet* and *Restlessness*, and these are accompanied with great Anguish or Trouble of Mind, which is another Attendant of an evil Conscience awak'd. *Judas* having betray'd his innocent Lord and Master, felt such unsufferable Anguish of Soul and Torment, as made him chuse Strangling and Death rather than Life, and to seek to an Halter for Ease, from the Extremity of the Torture of a galling and a guilty Conscience. We have innumerable Examples of this, both in Heathen Histories, and in our Church-History. All the most inhumane Cruelties and Tortures, which the Wit and Malice of the most barbarous and merciless Tyrants could ever invent, cannot equal the Torment of an evil Conscience, being awak'd. Among the Fabulous Narrations of Heathen Poets, we read much of Furies with their Snakes, Torches, and Firebrands, cruelly tormenting great and heinous Offenders. But

these were only to set forth more to the Life, the much more cruel Tormentings of an accusing and guilty Conscience. Their own Wickedness, Couzenages, Rapines, Murthers ; their own Whoredoms, Blasphemies, and other horrid Provocations ; the vile Things which their Consciences told these Offenders, that they had done, were the Furies, Snakes, and fiery Torches, which continually haunted and pursued them, and would not suffer them to take rest Day or Night (*d*). The wiser Heathens understood this, and have also told us, that no Punishment can compare with the terrible Lashings of a tormenting Conscience, far exceeding the Lashings of those revengeful Furies.

I may add, that an accusing Conscience makes outward Crosses and Calamities more to afflict and disturb us. He is not fit to bear outward Troubles, who hath so much within from unquiet Conscience. This sharpens the Edge of Afflictions, making them to wound the deeper.

But it may be many feel not any thing of this Misery in Life, their Conscience being all along in a deep, or rather dead Sleep ; but these Men cannot promise themselves, that the Alarm of approaching Death shall not awake it. And if it do, in what a terrible Plight will they be ? How will Fearfulness and Trembling fall upon them, and Horror overwhelm them ? How will Trouble and Anguish prevail against them ? They will see Death in all the terrible Shapes and Representations that may be.

be. They will see it coming, as a Sheriff with a Writ of Ejectment, to throw them out of House and Home, or like a merciless Officer, to arrest them, and drag them to the Prison, or Place of Torment, or as a Lion, to break all their Bones, and to tear them in pieces, while there is none to deliver them. Sometimes Conscience being awak'd doth so affright Men, that (as it was with *Nabal*) their Heart dies within them, and becomes like a Stone; sometimes they die raging and despairing. The Approach of Death is the time when especially Men stand in need of Comfort, and an evil Conscience awak'd will not speak good of them, but evil; and neither Ministers nor Friends can speak Comfort to impenitent Sinners upon good Grounds; or, if they offer Comfort to them, the full Cry of their Sins, wherewith their Conscience pursues them, will not suffer them to hear it. In a word, an evil Conscience is Death's Sting, that which makes Death such a frightful Enemy to Men, and that it doth them such dreadful Mischief. Death of itself can only kill the Body, but an evil Conscience stings the Soul to Death.

It may be, that neither any Afflictions of Life, nor the Terrors of the Approach of Death will awake an evil Conscience, but impenitent Sinners must assure themselves, that it will certainly awake at Judgment; it will awake then never to sleep any more. Then it will and must speak, as the Sinner then shall and must hear. When all Books of Mens

composing shall perish, and the Heavens shall pass away as a Scroll, then this Book will remain; and at that last Day it shall be open'd, that all that is writ in it may be read by the whole World. There is nothing which we think, say, or do throughout our whole Life, but Conscience doth note it down (*e*). As *Judah's Sin*, Jer. 17. 1. so our Sins are written with a Pen of Iron, and with the Point of a Diamond upon the Table of our Hearts, or Consciences. All the Faults of impenitent Sinners are registred there on purpose, that they may be read at the last and great Day; when every one of their Consciences will be as a thousand Witnesses against them. When the Hand-writing of their Conscience appears against them, it is easie to imagine in what Condition they will be, even in *Belshazzar's Condition*, when the Hand-writing appear'd upon the Wall; *Their Countenances will change, and their Thoughts trouble them, and the Joints of their Loins be loos'd, and their Knees smite one against another*, Dan. 5. 6.

It remains only, that I speak of the Misery of an evil Conscience after Judgment, which is the greatest of all; that Misery, which impenitent Sinners must endure as long as they have a Conscience, that is, eternally. A Conscience throughly awak'd is a kind of Hell here, a fore-taste of those Torments which damned Spirits do suffer; but it will be much more intolerable hereafter. In this Life it chastiseth with Whips, but then it will chastise with Scorpions. Tho' Conscience was
born

born and bred up with us, yet it will not die with us, but live with us for ever in Happiness or Misery. When Man dies, Conscience dies not; when the Body is corrupted in the Grave, Conscience lives; and when the Body shall awake and rise up after Death, Conscience will be ready to accompany it and us to the Bar of the dreadful Judgment of God; and not only so, but it will continue with us to all Eternity (*f*). And as the company of it is no small part of the Happiness of the glorious triumphant Saints in Heaven, so it will be a principal part of the Misery of the poor unhappy Creatures in Hell, *where the Worm dyeth not, as the Fire is not quenched.* Our Saviour not only forewarns us of this, *S. Mark 9. 44,* but also repeats it *v. 46,* and again *v. 48.* And by the *Worm* Interpreters, both ancient and modern (*g*), understand the Accusations, Indictments, and severe Reflections of Mens own Consciences, which will, as a Worm, be continually gnawing and griping at the Hearts of them.

(*a*) A continual trembling] Τρέμειν ἐποῖνσε, *S. Chrysoſt.* in 1 *Cor.* 2. 14, who follows the 70, who have, Ἐσμεν εἰς ἐν ὧν καὶ τρέμειν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, *Gen.* 4. 14.

(*b*) Most barbarous Tyrants] As *Caligula*, *Qui ad minima tonitrua & fulgura commovere, caput obvolvere; ad vero majora proripere se e strato, sub lectumque condere solebat;* *Sueton.* in *Calig.* c. 51.

(*c*) All the most inhuman Cruelties and Tortures, &c.] *Pena autem vehemens & multo sevirior illis, Quas & Ceditius gravis invenit & Rhadamantus, Nocte dieque suam gestare in pectore testem,* *Juven.* *Satyr.* 13.

(*d*) The

(d) The wiser Heathens understood this] *Nolite putare, quemadmodum in fabulis sepe numero videtis, eos qui aliquid impie scelerateque compiserint, agitari & perterreretur Furiarum tadis ardentibus. Sua quemque fraus, & suus terror maxima vexat, suum quemque scelus agitat amentiaque afficit, suae male cogitationes conscientiaque animi terrent, haec sunt impiis assidue domesticae Furiae, Cicero pro Sex Rosc. Amer. vers. med. We have almost the same in his Oration in L. Calp. Pison. vers. med.*

(e) Conscience doth note it down] The word for Conscience, Rom. 2. 15, in the Syriac is ܢܬܪܢ from ܢܬܪܢ *depinxit, descripsit, delineavit*; for it writes down all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, and (as it were) delineates and depaints them upon a Table.

(f) To all Eternity] Satan hath, in all times, done his utmost to banish the Belief of eternal Torments out of the World; And therefore *Lucretius* bestirs himself so much as to this: *Nam si certum finem esse viderent Aeternarum homines, aliqua ratione valerent. Religionibus atque minis obistere vatum. Nunc ratio nulla est restandi, nulla facultas, Aeternas quoniam penas in morte timendum.* So *Lucretius*, l. 1. But now Satan is more busie than ever, because his time is short, and hath perswaded even some that call themselves Christians to dispute against an Eternity of Torments.

(g) Interpreters, both ancient and modern] As to more ancient Interpreters, *Theophylact* is very plain; *Σελήνη δὲ ἡ πῶς ἡ συνείδησις ἐστὶν ἐκείνη, ἡ ἡ μὴν τῶν ἀρχαίων τῶν ἐν τῇ βίᾳ τῶν αἰώνων; ἥτις ὡς πῶς σελήνη καλεῖται παρὰ;* *Theophyl.* in S. Mar. 9. And so *S. Ambrose*, in S. Luc. 14, long before him, *Vermis est eo quod irrationabilia animi peccata mentem rei sensumque compungant, & quaedam exedant viscera Conscientiae.*

C H A P. XIV.

Inferences from that which hath been said, more especially in the Four last Chapters.

FROM that which hath been said it may appear, that, 1. We ought to reverence our Consciences ; 2. It ought to be our great Endeavour to get and keep a good Conscience.

1. We should reverence our Consciences. God rules in us by his Deputy Conscience. As *Moses* was unto *Aaron*, instead of God, *Exod.* 4. 16, so is Conscience to us. It gives us Laws, and exacts Obedience to them, and rewards it ; as also it punisheth the Disobeyers of them. Conscience rules not over mean Men only, but over Emperors and the greatest Monarchs in the World : It hath none above it but God, none hath dominion over the Conscience but God only. An Emperor is commended for saying, (*a*) *That to seek to rule over Mens Consciences, is to invade the Tower of Heaven* ; that is, to challenge that to our selves which belongs to God. And as none hath Power over Conscience but God alone, so He hath given it Power over us ; He hath made it

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our Supervisor or Overseer. Conscience is placed in us to be as it were God's Spy, to take notice of all that is done (*b*) or passeth, whether within or without us, and to pry in- to our very Thoughts (*c*). That may be ap- ply'd to Conscience, which the Psalmist saith of God himself, *Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising: thou understandest my very thoughts. Thou compassest my paths, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all our ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, thou knowest it altogether,* Psal. 139. Conscience (as it were) stands behind the Curtain with its Pen always ready in its Hand, and overhears, and also writes down whatsoever it hears. Some have call'd Conscience, *The Keeper of the Court-rolls of Heaven.* In many Conscience may be a closed and sealed Book now, but it will be laid open before all the World, and all their Thoughts, Words, and Actions will be represented to the view of Men and Angels. We are too much Strangers to our selves, but our Consciences are not Strangers to us, they are intimately acquainted with us, and must and will witness one day all that they know of us. They have a Bar, at which they can ar- raign Sinners here, putting them also in re- membrance of a more awful Bar, before which they must appear hereafter. All this consi- der'd, how ought we to reverence our Con- sciences! We cannot have an heavier Foe than our own Conscience, if we despise it; nor a faster Friend, if we reverence and hearken to it. The Approvings and Reprovings of Con-
science

science are of such force, that the former cheer the Heart more than any Cordial, the later torment more than any Racks or other Instruments of Cruelty. They little know what they do, who slight or injure Conscience (*d*).

2. The Happiness of a good Conscience, and the Misery of an evil one, being such as hath been shew'd, we ought to make it our great Endeavour to get and keep a good Conscience. A good Conscience is a Grape of the Heavenly *Canaan*, the sweetness of which we taste here, but we shall more than taste it hereafter. A good Conscience sets a Man above the reach of Mens Thoughts and Tongues, above all the Chances and Changes of this uncertain World. He that hath this, needs not envy any of the glittering appearances of Happiness, which so dazle the Eyes of Mortals. The richest Gift which our Blessed Saviour (when he ascended on high) left us, next to the Holy Ghost and the Graces of it, is, to rejoyce in the Comforts of a good Conscience: This will stick close to us; it says to us as *Ruth* said to *Naomi*, *Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge*; and Death itself shall not part a good Conscience and us. On the other side, they need not any to give them Sorrow, that have an evil Conscience. Some have not fear'd to say of a good Conscience, that it is the summ of all Good (*e*); and it may with as much Truth and Reason be said of an evil Conscience, that it is the summ of all Misery.

As

As Fear (*f*), so also Shame, Sadness, and sometimes Despair, are the melancholic Companions of an evil Conscience; like as Boldness, Holy Confidence, Joy, and Rejoycing are the welcome Companions of a good one (*g*). An evil Conscience will stick as close to Men (*h*) as (according to that which was said even now) a good one will do. As their Jaylor or Keeper, it will cleave to and pursue them, and as they cannot fly from it, so it will not be chas'd away from them; yea, after Death, it will abide with them, and be continually preying upon, and pulling at the very Hearts of them. Methinks then Men should need no persuading to labour to get and keep a good Conscience, yea, to make it their principal Endeavour in the use of all means, and to give themselves no Rest till they have obtain'd it. They should the rather do this, because not only we and others are much benefitted by a good Conscience, but also it tends very much to the promoting the Glory of God. He that hath a good Conscience is such as the Apostle desir'd that his *Philippians* might be, that is, *an approver of the things that are excellent, sincere, and without offence, being fill'd with the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God, Phil. 1, 10, 11.* Whether we do according to the Directions of a good Conscience, or suffer for so doing, God is glorified. Add hereto, that when they see our *Good Works* done out of a *Good Conscience*, others also will glorifie our Father which is in Heaven. Finally, a good Con-

Conscience will direct us, whatsoever we do, to do it to the Glory of God.

(a) An Emperor is commended for saying, &c.] *Maximilian* the First. The Jewish Writers say, That the King neither judgeth, nor is judged: See *Misna* in *Tract. Sanhedr.* But *Origen*, in *Rom.* 2. 15, says of Conscience, *Judicat & non judicatur*; Conscience judgeth all Men, but is judg'd of no meer Man whatever.

(b) God's Spy, to take notice of all that is done.] *Homini- bus celo quod egi, mihi celare nequeo*, D. Bernard. de inter. dom. c. 13. *Ut alius lateas, tute tibi conscius eris.*

(c) To pry into our very Thoughts.] *Thales* being ask'd, *Ἐι λήθει Θεὸς ἀνθρώπου ἀδικῶν*, answer'd, *ἀλλ' οὐδὲ διαγούμεν*, Diog. Laert. in *Thalet.* That which he said of the Heathen false Gods is most true, being apply'd to Conscience, from which our very Thoughts cannot be hid, much less our Actions.

(d) They little know what they do, who slight or injure Conscience.] *O te miserum, si contemnis hunc testem.* Seneca, *Epist.* 43.

(e) The summ of all Good.] *Quenam summa boni? Mens que sibi conscia recti.* Bias ap. *Auson.*

(f) As Fear.] *Proprium est nocentium trepidare.* Multos fortuna liberat paena, metu neminem, Senec. *Epist.* 97. where he also makes it the first and greatest Punishment of Sinners, that they have sinned; the next, that they always fear and tremble. See *Wisd.* 17. 11.

(g) Joy and Rejoycing are the welcome Companions of a good Conscience.] *Vis nunquam esse tristis? bene vive.*

(h) Conscience will stick close to Men.] *Ubique vado, Conscientia mea non me deserit, sed praesens adfistit, & quicquid facio scribit.* S. Bernard. de inter. dom. c. 31. *Quocunque vado, Conscientia mea mecum est. Si male facio adest illa, adest vivo, sequitur mortuum, ubique mihi gloria vel confusio inseparabilis.* Idem *Meditat. Devot.* c. 13.

C H A P. XV.

How a Good Conscience may be obtain'd.

I. **F**OR the obtaining a Good Conscience the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, c. 10. 22, hath given us a plain Direction; *Having our Hearts sprinkled from an Evil Conscience.* We must have our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, before we can have a good one. And if it be ask'd, what our Hearts are to be sprinkl'd with, the same Apostle resolves us, they are to be sprinkled with the Blood of CHRIST: *The blood of Bulls and Goats sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying the flesh, but the blood of Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offer'd himself without spot to God, can purge our Conscience from dead works, to serve the living God,* Heb. 9. 13, 14. There is nothing in the World that hath the Vertue to do this, but the Blood of that Lamb, without spot or blemish; that is, *the blood of sprinkling, speaking better things than that of Abel,* Heb. 12. 24. So that through sanctification of the Spirit unto Obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 1. 2, that is, the having our Hearts sprinkled with it, we come to have a good Conscience. This
Blood

Blood speaks, (as we have heard) and speaks good things, bringing to the Conscience the glad tydings of Peace. It makes the Conscience both pure and peaceable, pacifying it as well as purifying it. It leaves behind it no more Conscience of Sin, whereas the Gifts and Sacrifices under the Law could not make him that offer'd them perfect as to Conscience. If it be ask'd further, how we may have our Hearts sprinkled with the Blood of Christ, I answer, 1. By Faith joyn'd with Sincerity of Heart : *Let us come with a true Heart, in full assurance of Faith, having our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, Heb. 10. 22. In full assurance of Faith, that is, being fully establish'd in the Faith, fully assur'd and perswaded of the Truth of Christianity.* 2. In order to the having our Hearts sprinkled with that precious Blood, we should confess our Sins : *If we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness, 1 Joh. 1. 9.* This Confession must be made chiefly to God, yet not only ; but also to our Neighbor, so oft as we have offended him, and (if need be) to our Spiritual Guide or Minister ; See *S. Jam. 5. 16.* 3. As we must with a pure, *humble, penitent, and obedient Heart* confess our Sins past, so we must walk in the Light for the time to come, if we would have the Blood of that spotless Lamb of God to cleanse our Conscience from dead Works. *If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, (that is, if we live pure Lives, as He is pure) then we have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of*

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Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all Sin, 1 Joh.
 1. 7.

II. In order to the obtaining a good Conscience, we should labour to have it rightly instructed: *That the Soul be without Knowledge, it is not good, Prov. 19. 2, or (for so it may be translated) without Knowledge the Soul (and so the Conscience) is not good.* To avoid the trouble and disquiet of a Scrupulous, or Doubting, or Perplexed Conscience, as also the unhappy Condition of the Person that hath an Erring Conscience, it is necessary to get Conscience well instructed. Now, in order to the having Conscience instructed and satisfied what we are to believe and do, and to the keeping it from being misled, a late zealous English Writer for the Church of Rome advises us (b), to study Church-authority, what perpetual Power our departing Lord hath left to the Governours of it, and what Assistance promis'd them for exposition of the Sense of the divine Scriptures, and for deciding Controversies in matters of Faith, and what Obligation he hath laid upon all the Churches Subjects to hearken to them, and not to depart from their Directions, how this Authority is by our Lord instated in an Infallibility in all Necessaries. One way (says he) by which the Will blinds and misleads the Judgment or Conscience, is, that it allows it not to study first, and duly examine the main Point of Church-authority. This would save many other Searches; this Search is to be undertaken much rather than all the other. Thus that zealous Advocate for the Romish Church

Church and Cause. And we must observe, that the Church of which he speaks is not the truly Catholick Church, but his Church, or (as they call it) the Roman Catholick Church. And so the Lesson that we are to learn is, the Infallibility and Authority of his Church; and this being learnt, there needs no more for the satisfying and settling the Conscience. But, after all, it will be time enough to study this, when any of his Party can prove that CHRIST ever made any Grant of such Authority and Infallibility to the Church of *Rome*, as it pretends to. In the mean time, in order to the having Conscience rightly instructed, or the obtaining Knowledge of our Duty, or what we are to believe and do, I shall recommend to every one the study of three things, to wit, the study, 1st, of *Humility*; 2^{dly}, of a *Godly Life*; 3^{dly}, of the *Scriptures*.

1st, It is necessary to the attaining Instruction, or Knowledge, that we study Humility, Christian Meekness, and Modesty: *The meek will be guide in judgment, the meek will be teach his way*, Psal. 25. 9. That we may receive Instruction, we ought to become little Children in Humility, Teachableness, or Aptness and Readiness to learn. None are so unfit to receive Instruction as they that attribute too much to their own Judgment, and have too high an Opinion of their own Abilities. Therefore the Wise King presseth this Duty of not thinking highly of our selves so earnestly, Prov. 3, *Lean not to thine own Understanding,*

standing, v. 5. and *Be not wise in thine own eyes,* v. 7. And, c. 26. 12, *Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him.* A Fool will sooner learn and receive Instruction than he. Especially we should be jealous of and suspect our own Understanding, when we see that those whom we cannot but esteem Persons of great Judgment and Integrity, as well as Learning, do differ in Persuasion from us.

2dly, The study of a Godly Life, and that we may keep the Commandments of God, is no less necessary, if we would obtain true Knowledge and Instruction. The Psalmist *had more Understanding than the Ancients, because he kept God's Commandments,* Psal. 119. 100. And so our Saviour saith, *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and I will love him, and manifest myself to him,* S. John 14. 21. And again, c. 7. 17, *He that will do his will, shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God.*

3dly, That we may have Conscience rightly instructed, we must diligently apply our selves to the study of the Scriptures. The Word of God must dwell plenteously in us; we must make it our Delight, and exercise our selves in it day and night. The Psalmist *understood more than his Teachers, because God's Testimonies were his Meditation,* Psal. 119. 99. We must also labour to attain to a good understanding of the Sense or Meaning of the Scriptures: In order to this, it may be our Wisdom to call in to us the Assistance of
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our Understanding Friends, and especially of our Spiritual Guides or Teachers. They that are unlearn'd, and of meaner Capacities, should more especially do this: As to others that have Abilities and Learning, they must also make use of all other Helps for knowing the true meaning of the Scriptures, such as the considering the Scope of the Author, together with the Phrase and Propriety of the Language in which the Scriptures were writ, and (c) that which goes before or follows after the place which we desire to understand; so also the (d) comparing one place of Scripture with another, and (e) expounding that which is dark and doubtful by that which is undoubted and manifest; and lastly, the consulting the Expositions of the Fathers or ancient Guides of the Church. In the use of all which means we must enquire after the Truth with a single Heart, not infected with any Prejudice, or Self-love, or Regard to any Sin which we are not willing to part with.

III. Conscience being rightly instructed, we must hearken to the Voice of it, especially in all that it saith to us out of the Word of God; and this, whether it speak to us by way of Counsel and Direction, or by way of Correction and Reproof; whether it calls on us, and urges us to do any thing, or it forbids and dissuades the doing it. It is said, *Isa. 30. 21, Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee*; but we have a Voice not behind, but

within us, somewhat that speaks in silence, not to our Ears, but to our Minds (f), and it is no other than Conscience. We must then see that we do not despise it thus speaking, or turn the deaf Ear to it, lest seeing this it either leave off speaking, and then it will not be a Conscience faithfully good; or (if it speak) it do not speak Peace to us, and then it will not be peaceably good. If then we would have Conscience either to deal faithfully and honestly with us, or to speak Peace to us, and encourage us, we must see that we hearken diligently to it, and do not neglect or despise it when it speaketh.

IV. Often communing with and examining our Consciences, cannot but be an especial means for obtaining a good Conscience. As the Psalmist counsels others to practise this, *Commune with your Hearts upon your Beds*, Psal. 4. 4, so it was his own Practise, *In the night I commune with my Heart* (g), Psal. 77. 7. This Practise hath been earnestly recommended to us by holy Men in all Ages of the Church. One of our more ancient Christian Writers says (h) *That we are Spiritual Merchants or Traders; and as they that trade for the World often compute their Gains and Losses, so should we examine, Evening and Morning, how our Trading for Heaven stands. Every Evening when we lye down upon our Beds, we should ask our selves, Think'st thou that God hath been displeas'd with me in any thing this day? Have I utter'd any idle Words? Have I offended my Brother any way,*

way, or detracted from him, and done any Wrong to his good Name? When I sung with my Voice, was my Heart drawn away with Worldly Thoughts, wandring after my Covetousness? When I was tempted with fleshly Lust, did I willingly drink in the enticing Poyson? In like manner every Morning ask thy self, How have I pass'd this Night? Did my Mind awake together with my Body? Did mine Eyes shed Tears? Did I entertain any sinful Thoughts, and nourish and dwell upon them? &c. Would it not be too tedious, I should transcribe the like Passages out of sundry other ancient Guides of the Church (i), as also out of a devout Person that liv'd in these later Ages. (k) But I cannot forbear transcribing the words of an Heathen (l) to this purpose, who sets forth very lively the Excellency of this Practice, recommending it by the Example of another Heathen, as well as by his own. Our Mind or Conscience (says he) is to be call'd every day to give an Account. Thus did Sextius, when he betook himself to Rest, he ask'd himself, What Evil hast thou heal'd this day? What Vice hast thou resisted? In what respect art thou become better? How quiet, how sound and pleasant Sleep must follow such a Self-examination as this? Thus Seneca, who also adds concerning himself; When the Light is taken away, and my Wife hath held her Peace, knowing what my Custom is, I survey or measure over the whole Day with my self, call to mind whatever I have done and said; I hide nothing from my self; I pass over nothing. This must needs be an excellent means to obtain

a Conscience both uprightly and peaceably good. Would we every Night seriously ask our selves that one Question, *What have I done?* Jer. 8. 6, we might lye down in Peace, and our Sleep would be sweet. But some, perhaps out of meer Sloath, neglect it; others are afraid to ask their Consciences any Questions, because they know that they will not speak Good of them, but Evil: The most have their Thoughts taken up continually, Night and Day, with other Matters, so that they have not leisure to commune with their own Hearts. And thus the things concerning their Consciences Peace and Welfare are altogether neglected and disregarded.

V. As we should often commune with and examine our selves, so we should judge our selves: The Examination is in order to the passing Sentence: The judging and accusing our selves is the way to prevent the Accusations of Conscience. He that often accuseth and passeth Sentence upon himself, will not need to fear any other Accusers. *If we would judge our selves, we need not be judged,* 1 Cor. 11. 31, either of the LORD, or of our own Consciences.

I might recommend many other things in order to the attaining a good Conscience. As the walking carefully in our particular Callings, doing the Duties thereof to the Glory of
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of God, and the Benefit of those among whom we live, more especially the walking as always in the Sight and Presence of God ; and so the living in the Fear of God. Where the true Fear of God is, it is always accompany'd with a departing from Evil : departing from Evil brings a good Life, a good Life a good Conscience. To all these we must add Prayer. If any of us lack a good Conscience, let us ask it of God. Let us fervently pray, *That the Peace of God which passeth all Understanding, may keep our Hearts and Minds by Christ Jesus*, Phil. 4. 7. that it may be our happy Lot and Portion, to rejoyce in the Comforts of a truly good Conscience.

(a) Without Knowledge the Soul is not good.] בלא דעת
נפש לא טוב

(b) A late zealous English Writer for the Church of Rome.]
R. H. in his Fifth Discourse of the *Guide in Controversies*, Sect. 277.

(c) That which goes before, or follows after.] *Recolendum est quæ illam sententiam superiora pepererint, quibusque connexa dependeat*, St. August. Epist. 29. circ. princ. *Solet circumstantia Scripturæ illuminare sententiam*, Id. l. 83. Quæst. qu. 69.

(d) The comparing one place of Scripture with another.] *Videns differentias similium ad similia*, Orig. Tract. 19. in S. Mat.

(e) Expounding that which is dark and doubtful by that which is manifest.] *Ubi apertius ponuntur, ibi descendum est, quomodo in locis intelligentur obscuris*, S. August. de Doct. Christ. l. 3. c. 26. *Manifestiora quæque prævaleant, & de incertis certiora præscribant*, Tertul. de Resur. car. c. 19. *Incerta de certis, & obscura de manifestis præjudicantur*, Ibid. c. 1.

(f) Somewhat that speaks in silence, not to our Ears, but to our Minds.] *In silentio sonat quidam, non auribus, sed mentibus.*

(g) In

(g) In the Night I commune with my Heart.] בלילה
עם לבי אשהה

(h) One of our more ancient Christian Writers.] Ephrem Sy-
rus, *Serm. Asect. de vit. Relig.*

(i) Sundry other ancient Guides of the Church.] S. Basil
Serm. de instit. monach in fine, S. Chrysost. *Hom. 43. S. Matt.*
ver. fin. &c. To them add, *Ausonius, Edyll. 16.*

Non prius in dulcem declinat lunina somnum,

Omnia quam longi reputaverit acta diei.

Qua prætergressus? quid gestum in tempore? quid non?

Quid volui quod nolle bonum foret? &c.

(k) A devout Person that liv'd in these later Ages.] S. Ber-
nard, *form. honest. vit.*

(l) The Words of an Heathen.] Seneca *de ira*, l. 3. c. 36.

CHAP.

C H A P. XVI.

*How we may judge whether we have
a good Conscience.*

THat which hath been said of the Offices of Conscience, *Chap. 2.* and of a good Conscience, *Chap. 4.* may be useful to us, in order to the judging whether we have a good Conscience or no. But further, a good Conscience may be known.

1. By its Companions. These are Faith, Purity, Charity, and a good Conversation. We have three of these together, and all of them in the Company of a good Conscience, *1 Tim. 1. 5.* *The End of the Commandment is Love or Charity, out of a pure Heart, and a good Conscience, and Faith unfeigned.* And we find a good Conversation coupled with a good Conscience, *1 Pet. 3. 16.* *Having a good Conscience, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may be ashamed, that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ.* A good Conversation is very earnestly press'd upon Christians by that Apostle, yea he calls upon us, to shew all holy Conversation. *As he that hath called you is Holy, be ye also holy in all manner of Conversation, 1 Pet. 1. 15.* And again, *What man-*
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ner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness, 2 Pet. 3. 11. And such a Conversation as this may encourage us to hope, that we have a good Conscience. As the Apostle trusted that he had a good Conscience, for he desir'd to have his Conversation honest in all things, Heb. 13. 18. On the other hand, if we make Conscience of avoiding some Sins, and performing some Duties, but take no care to practise other Duties, and reform other things that are amiss in us ; if we single out some things, wherein we will obey, but crave, or rather take leave to transgress in other things, we vainly flatter our selves, if we imagine that we have a good Conscience. (a) That which is done for the sake of God and Conscience, is done equally. He that hath a good Conscience, as he disputes not God's Commandments, but obeys them readily, so he divides not God's Commandments, but obeys them equally. He with the Psalmist hath respect to all God's Commandments, and refrains his Feet from every evil way, and endeavours with Zachary and Elizabeth to walk in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord, blameless. Thus S. Paul liv'd in all good Conscience, Acts 23. 1. I add, that as he that hath a good Conscience takes care to obey all God's Commandments, so he doth it *always to the end*, Psal. 119. 44, 112. He holds on in a constant, even, and uniform Course of Obedience, to all the Commandments of God. He throughout his whole Life makes Conscience of all that God commands or forbids.

2. It may be an Argument that we have a good Conscience, if we can heartily love those that reprove us for our Faults. (c) As *Alipius* lov'd *S. Augustine* the more for speaking that which was the Occasion of his Repentance, and turning from his evil Course. If when the Righteous smites us, we can take it as a Kindness, when he reproves us, we can esteem it an excellent Oyl or Balm, and in requital of so good an Office can pray heartily for him, we may be encourag'd to hope that we have a good Conscience. On the other hand, if we are angry with our Reprovers (d), we betray the Guilt of our own Consciences, and discover that they are not such as they ought to be.

3. To suffer for Conscience, may encourage a Man to think, that he hath a good Conscience. When for Conscience of God, or toward God (that is, that we ought to do our Duty to God, whatever become of it) a Man endures Grievs, suffering wrongfully (1 *Pet.* 2. 19.) when he can part with Estate, Liberty, and the Company of his dearest Relations, and not account his very Life dear to him, that he may not sin against Conscience, this may confirm him in the Persuasion, that he hath a good Conscience. One *Benevolus* being commanded by *Justina* the Empress (e) to do something against the true Faith, with the Promise of being promoted by her to an higher Dignity if he obey'd, made this Answer, *Why do*

you:

you promise me an higher Dignity, for a Reward of Impiety? take from me even this which I have, only let me preserve a Conscience sound in the Faith. They who in like manner matter not what they suffer, that Conscience may be preserv'd pure and entire, may be encourag'd to hope, that they have a good Conscience. But I must add, that we must take care that it be really Conscience (and not somewhat else) that we suffer for. Every Disease of the Mind, or causeless Scruple, or slight Persuasion, or groundless Fear, is not Conscience; tho' these have too oft the Favour or Luck to be mistaken for it. Yea, there have not wanted those that have mistaken Humour, or Phantasia, or Passion, or Prejudice, or some false Doctrine, or Suggestion of the evil one for Conscience. It therefore concerns us to be sure that it is really for Conscience, and not for any of these that we do suffer; otherwise our suffering will not be any Ground of Belief, that we have a good Conscience.

(a) That which is done for the sake of God, is done equally.] *Omne bonum quod fit propter Deum, in omnibus rebus aequaliter observatur. Op. imperf. in S. Matth. Hom. 45.*

(b) He holds on in a constant Course of Obedience.] See Herbert's Poem of Constancy,

*Who is the honest Man?
He that doth still and strongly good pursue, &c.*

(c) *Alipius*

(c) *Alipius lov'd S. Austin the more.*] *Quod alius acceperit ad succensendum mihi, accepit honestus adolescens ad succensendam sibi, & ad me ardentius diligendum.* So *S. Austin, Confess.* l. 6. c. 7.

(d) *If we are angry with our Reprovers.*] *Dum mihi irascuntur, suam indicant Conscientiam,* *S. Hieron. Rustic. Monach.*

(e) *Benevolus being commanded by Justina the Empress, &c.*] *Ruffinus, Eccl. Hist. c. 16.*

HEBREWS 13. 18.

Pray for us : for we trust that we have a good Conscience in all things, willing to live honestly.

F I N I S.

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in the Gospel contrary to Reason, yet there
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